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DE L'ESPRIT:

OR,

ESSAYS

ON THE

MIND,

AND ITS

SEVERAL FACULTIES.

Written by HELVETIUS.

Tranſlated from the Edition printed under the Author's Inſpection.

——— Unde animi conſtet natura videndum,
Qua fiant ratione & qua vi quæque gerantur
In terris.

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PREFACE.

THE ſubject I propoſe to examine in this work is new and intereſting. People have hitherto conſidered the mind only under ſome of its views: for great writers have no more than caſt a rapid glance over it; and this has emboldened me to treat of the ſubject.

The knowlege of the mind, when we conſider it in its utmoſt extent, is ſo cloſely connected with the knowlege of the heart, and of the paſſions of men, that it was impoſſible to write on this ſubject, without treating, on that part of morality at leaſt, which is common to men of all nations, and which in all governments can have no other object in view than the public advantage.

The principles I eſtabliſh on this ſubject are, I think, conformable to the general intereſt, and to experience. It is by facts that I have aſcended to cauſes. I imagined that morality ought to be treated like all the other ſciences, and founded on experiment, as well as natural philoſophy. I have adhered to this idea, from the perſuaſion that all morality, where its principles are of uſe to the public, is neceſſarily conformable to the morals of religion, which are only the perfection of human morals. For the reſt, if I am deceived, and if, contrary to my expectation, ſome of my principles are not conformable to the general intereſt, this proceeds from an error of my judgment, and not of my heart; and I declare, beforehand, that I diſown them.

I deſire but one favour of my reader, that is, to hear, before he condemns me; to follow the chain that unites all my ideas together; to be my judge, and not of my party. This requeſt is not the effect of a fooliſh confidence, for I have too often found that to be bad at night, which I have thought to be good in the morning, to have an high opinion of my own abilities.

Perhaps I have treated of a ſubject above my ſtrength: but what man knows himſelf ſo well, as not to preſume too much? I cannot, however, reproach myſelf with not having uſed my utmoſt endeavours to merit the approbation of the public; and if I do not obtain it, I ſhall be more afflicted than ſurprized. In this caſe, to deſire is not ſufficient to obtain.

In every thing I have ſaid, I have ſought only for the truth, not merely for the honour of delivering it, but becauſe truth is uſeful to man. If I have deviated from it, I ſhall find, even in my errors themſelves, motives of conſolation. "If men, as M. de Fontenelle obſerves, cannot, on any ſubject "whatſoever, arrive at what is rational, till after having, in that very ſubject, "exhauſted all imaginable folly," my errors will then be of uſe to my fellow-citizens: I ſhall have pointed out the rock by my ſhipwreck. "How many "abſurdities, adds M. de Fontenelle, ſhould we not now utter, if the ancients "had not already ſaid them before us, and had in a manner delivered us from "them?"

I repeat then, that I ſhall warrant in my work nothing but the purity and rectitude of my intentions. In the mean time, however aſſured we may be of our intentions, the voice of envy is ſo favourably heard, and its frequent declamations are ſo adapted to ſeduce the minds that are equally honeſt and

enlightened, that we cannot write in a manner without trembling. The diſcouragement given to men of genius from imputations frequently filled with calumny, ſeem already to preſage the return of the ages of ignorance. It is, in every inſtance, only in mediocrity of talents that people find an aſylum againſt the purſuits of the envious. Mediocrity is now become a protection, and I have probably obtained that protection in ſpite of myſelf.

Beſides, I believe that it will be difficult for envy to impute to me the deſire of wounding my fellow-citizens. This kind of work, in which I conſider no man in particular, but men and nations in general, ought to ſhelter me from all ſuſpicion of malignity. I ſhall even add, that in reading theſe diſcourſes, it will be perceived that I love men, and deſire their happineſs, without hating or deſpiſing any of them in particular.

Some of my ideas will perhaps appear too bold. If the reader thinks them falſe, I deſire him to recollect, while he condemns them, that it is only by the boldeſt attempts that the greateſt truths can ſometimes be diſcovered; and that the fear of advancing an error, ought not to deter us from proceeding in the ſearch of truth. In vain would baſe and cowardly men preſcribe it, and ſometimes give it the name of odious and licentious; in vain do they repeat, that truth is often dangerous. Suppoſing that this is ſometimes the caſe, to what ſtill greater danger would that nation be expoſed, which ſhould conſent to continue in ignorace? Every nation without knowlege, when it has ceaſed to be fierce and ſavage, is degraded, and will ſooner or later be ſubdued. It was leſs the valour, than the military knowlege of the Romans, that triumphed over the Gauls.

If the knowlege of ſuch a truth, might, at ſuch an inſtant, be attended with ſome inconveniencies; that inſtant being paſt, that very truth will again become uſeful to all ages and nations.

Such is the fate of human things: there is none that may not at certain moments become dangerous; but it is only on this condition that we enjoy them. Wo to him that would from this motive deprive mankind of them.

At the very moment when they forbid the knowlege of certain truths, it will no longer be permited to mention any. A thouſand men in power, who have often ill intentions, under the pretence that it is ſometimes wiſe to to conceal the truth, would baniſh it entirely from the univerſe. Thus the enlightened part of the public, who alone know all its value, inceſſantly deſire it: they are not afraid to expoſe themſelves to uncertain evils to enjoy the real advantages it procures. Among the qualities of mankind, that which they eſteem the moſt is, that elevation of ſoul which refuſes to ſubmit to the meanneſs of a lye. They know how uſeful it is to think and ſpeak every thing; and that errors ceaſe to be dangerous, when it is permitted to to contradict them. They are ſoon known to be errors; they ſink of themſelves into the abyſs of forgetfulneſs, and truth alone ſwims over the vaſt extent of ages.

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The firſt deſign of this chapter is to ſhew, that the numerous circumſtances, the concourſe of which is abſolutely neceſſary to form illuſtrious men, are ſo ſeldom found united, that on ſuppoſing all men have equal mental faculties, thoſe who have a genius of the firſt rank, would be as uncommon as they are found to be. It is moreover proved in this chapter, that in morality alone we ought to ſeek for the true cauſe of the inequality of genius; that in vain we ſhould attribute it to the different temperature of climates; and in vain endeavour to explain from phyſical cauſes, an infinite number of political phænomena, that are very naturally explained by moral cauſes. Such are the conqueſts of the northern nations, the ſlavery and allegorical genius of the orientals, and, in ſhort, the ſuperiority of different nations in different arts and ſciences.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Of the Conqueſts of the Northern Nations, 223

In this chapter is ſhewn, that, to moral cauſes alone we ought to attribute the conqueſts of the northern nations.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of the Slavery and allegorical Genius of the Eaſtern Nations, 224

The application of the ſame principles.

CHAP. XXX.

Of the Superiority of certain Nations in different ſciences, 233

The nations who are the moſt illuſtrious in the arts and ſciences, are thoſe among whom the ſame arts and ſciences have been moſt honoured: it is not then from the different temperature of climates, but from moral cauſes that we ought to ſearch for the reaſon of the inequality of genius.

The general concluſion of this diſcourſe is, that all men well organized have the natural power of acquiring the moſt exalted ideas, and that the difference of genius obſervable in them, depends on the various circumſtances in which they are placed, and on the different education they receive. This concluſion diſcovers the full importance of education.

ESSAY IV.

OF THE DIFFERENT FACULTIES OF THE MIND.

TO convey an exact knowlege of the nature of the mind, it is propoſed in this diſcourſe to give clear ideas of its ſeveral Faculties.

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Of Imagination and Sentiment, 246

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Of a luminous, extenſive, and penetrating Wit; and of Taſte, 266

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Of a Genius for writing with Elegance, 271

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Of the Spirit of the Age, 275

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CHAP. VIII.

Of a true Underſtanding, 280

It is proved, in this chapter, that in complicated queſtions, judgment is not ſufficient to obtain a clear view of things; but that an extenſive mind is neceſſary for that purpoſe; that, in general, men are liable to be puffed up with an opinion of their own judgment, and to prefer it to genius: that conſequently they pretend to be ſuperior to men of abilities, and believe, that by acknowleging this, they really do themſelves but juſtice; and do not perceive that they are drawn into this error by a miſtake, common to almoſt all mankind: a miſtake of which it is, doubtleſs, uſeful to diſcover the cauſe.

CHAP. IX.

Of miſtaken Opinions, 285

This chapter is properly only an expoſition of the two following. There is here ſhewn only the difficulty of knowing ourſelves.

CHAP. X.

How far we are liable to miſtake the Motives by which we are determined, ibid.

An explication of the preceding chapter.

CHAP. XI.

Of Advice, 292

Enquiry is made in this chapter, why we are ſo prodigal of advice, and ſo blind to the motives that determine us to give it; and into what errors ignorance of ourſelves may, in this reſpect, ſometimes precipitate others. At the concluſion of this chapter are pointed out ſome of the means proper to facilitate the knowlege of ourſelves.

CHAP. XII.

Of Good Senſe, 297

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Spirit of Conduct, 299

CHAP. XIV.

Of the excluſive Qualities of the Mind, 305

After having endeavoured, in the preceding chapter, to annex clear ideas to ſeveral of the mental powers and faculties; it is of uſe to know what are the abilities of mind, which, in their own nature, muſt reciprocally exclude each other; and the talents, which, from contrary habits, are rendered in a manner incompatible. This is the ſubject to be examined both in this chapter and the following, in which is more particularly ſhewn the injuſtice of the public, in this reſpect, in relation to men of genius.

CHAP. XV.

Of the Injuſtice of the Public in this reſpect, 312

Attention is paid in this chapter to the conſideration of qualities that muſt reciprocally exclude each other; this is done in order to enlighten mankind with regard to the means of reaping the beſt advantage poſſible from their mental abilities.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

The Method of diſcovering that kind of ſtudy for which we are beſt qualified, 319

This method being pointed out, it ſeems that the plan of an excellent education ought neceſſarily to conclude this work: but this plan, though it might, perhaps, appear eaſy to ſketch out, would be, as will be ſeen in the following chapter, very difficult to execute.

CHAP. XVII.

Of Education, 325

It is here proved, that it would, doubtleſs, be extremely uſeful to perfect the public education; but that nothing could be more difficult; that our manners here actually oppoſe every kind of reformation; that in vaſt and powerful empires they have not always an urgent neceſſity for great men; and that, conſequently, the government cannot apply much attention to that part of the adminiſtration. It is, however, obſerved, that in monarchies, ſuch as ours, it would not be impoſſible to give the plan of an excellent education; but that this attempt would be abſolutely vain in empires ſubject to deſpotic power, ſuch as thoſe of the eaſt.

ERRATA.

Page 1. line 10. after *debate*, add *is*.

13. Note, col. 2. line 3. for *poſity*, read *paucity*.

DE

DE L'ESPRIT;

OR

ESSAYS on the MIND.

ESSAY I.

CHAP. I.

Of the Mind conſidered in itſelf.

WE hear every day diſputes with regard to what ought to be called the Mind; each perſon delivers his thoughts, but annexes different ideas to the word; and thus the debate is continued, without underſtanding each other.

In order therefore to enable us to give a juſt and preciſe idea of the word Mind, and its different acceptations, it is neceſſary firſt to conſider the Mind in itſelf.

We conſider the Mind either as the effect of the faculty of thinking, and in this ſenſe the Mind is no more than an aſſemblage of our thoughts; or, we conſider it as the very faculty of thinking.

But, in order to underſtand what is meant by the Mind, in the latter acceptation, we ought previouſly to know the productive cauſes of our ideas.

Man has two faculties; or, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, two paſſive powers, whoſe exiſtence is generally and diſtinctly acknowledged.

The one is the faculty of receiving the different impreſſions cauſed by external objects, and is called Phyſical Senſibility.

The other is the faculty of preſerving the impreſſions cauſed by theſe objects, called Memory; and Memory is nothing more than a continued, but weakened ſenſation.

Thoſe faculties which I conſider as the productive cauſes of our thoughts, and which we have in common with beaſts, would produce but a very ſmall number of ideas, if they were not aſſiſted by certain external organiſations.

If nature, inſtead of hands and flexible fingers, had terminated our wriſt with the foot of a horſe, mankind would doubtleſs have been totally deſtitute

of art, habitation, and defence againſt other animals. Wholly employed in the care of procuring food, and avoiding the beaſts of prey, they would have ſtill continued wandering in the foreſts, like fugitive flocks (a).

It is therefore evident, that according to this ſuppoſition, the police would never have been carried in any ſociety to that degree of perfection, to which it is now arrived. There is not a nation now exiſting, but with regard to the action of the Mind, muſt not have continued very inferior to certain ſavage

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(a) Many pieces have have been written on the ſouls of beaſts. They have been alternately denied and allowed the faculty of thinking. And, perhaps, a reſearch ſufficiently accurate has not yet been made into the difference between the nature of man and that of other animals, from whence the cauſe of the inferiority of what is called the ſoul of the latter may be derived.

1. All the feet of animals terminate either in horn, as thoſe of the ox and the deer; or in nails, as thoſe of the dog and the wolf; or in claws, as thoſe of the lion and the cat. Now this different organiſation of our hands, from that of the feet of animals, deprives them, as Mr. Buffon aſſerts, not only of all claim to the ſenſe of the touch; but alſo of the dexterity requiſite in handling an inſtrument, in order to make any of the diſcoveries which ſuppoſe the uſe of hands.

2. The life of animals, in general, being of a ſhorter duration than that of man, neither permits them to make ſo many obſervations, nor conſequently to acquire ſo many ideas.

3. Animals being better armed and better cloathed by nature than the human ſpecies, have fewer wants, and conſequently ought to have leſs invention. If the voracious animals are more cunning than others, it is becauſe hunger, ever inventive, inſpires them with the art of forming ſtratagems to ſurpriſe their prey.

4. The animals compoſe only a ſociety that flies from man, who, by the aſſiſtance of weapons, made by himſelf, is become formidable to the ſtrongeſt among them.

Beſides, man is the moſt fruitful animal upon earth. He is born, and lives in every climate; while many of the other animals, as the lion, the elephant, and the rhinoceros, are found only in a certain latitude.

And the more a ſpecies of animals, capable of making obſervations, is multiplied, the more ideas and genius it poſſeſſes.

But ſome may aſk why monkeys, whoſe paws are nearly as dexterous as our hands, do not make a progreſs equal to that of man? Becauſe they are inferior to him in ſeveral reſpects; becauſe men are more multiplied upon the earth; becauſe among the different ſpecies of monkeys, there are but few whoſe ſtrength can be compared to that of man; becauſe the monkeys being frugivorous, have fewer wants, and therefore leſs invention than man, becauſe their life is ſhorter, and they form only a fugitive ſociety with regard to man, and ſuch animals as the tyger, the lion, &c. and finally becauſe the organical diſpoſition of their body, keeps them like children, in perpetual motion, even after their deſires are ſatisfied. Monkeys are not ſuſceptible of laſſitude, which ought to be conſidered, as I ſhall prove in the third eſſay, as one of the principles of the perfection of the human mind.

By combining all theſe differences between the nature of man and beaſt, we may underſtand, why ſenſibility and memory, though faculties common to man and other animals, are in the latter only ſteril faculties.

It may perhaps be objected, that God, agreeable to his juſtice, cannot have ſubjected to pain and death innocent creatures; and conſequently that beaſts are meer machines. But, in anſwer to this objection, I muſt obſerve, that as neither the ſcripture, nor the church has any where declared, that animals are meer machines, we are doubtleſs ignorant of the motives for God's conduct towards animals; though we ought to ſuppoſe them juſt. There is no neceſſity for having recourſe to Malebranche's jocular reply to a perſon, who maintaining to him that animals were ſenſible of pain, ſaid, They have then probably eaten forbidden hay.

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nations, who have not two hundred different ideas (b), nor two hundred words to expreſs thoſe ideas; and whoſe language muſt conſequently be reduced, like that of animals, to five or ſix different ſounds or cries (c), if we take from it, the words Bow, Arrow, Nets, &c. which ſuppoſe the uſe of hands. From whence I conclude, that without a certain exterior organiſation, Senſibility and Memory in us would prove two ſteril faculties. We ought to examine if theſe two faculties, by the aſſiſtance of this organiſation, have in reality produced all our thoughts.

But before we examine this ſubject, I may poſſibly be aſked, whether theſe two faculties are modifications of a ſpiritual or a material ſubſtance? This queſtion, which has formerly been ſo often debated by philoſophers (d), and by ſome perſons revived in our time, does not neceſſarily fall within the limits of my work. What I have to offer, with regard to the Mind, is equally conformable to either of theſe hypotheſes. I ſhall therefore only obſerve, that if the church had not fixed our belief in reſpect to this particular, and we had been obliged by the light of reaſon alone, to acquire a knowledge of the thinking principle, we muſt have granted, that neither opinion is capable of demonſtration; and, conſequently that by weighing the reaſons, on both ſides, balancing the difficulties, and determining in favour of the greater number of probabilities, we ſhould form only conditional judgments. It would be the fate of this problem, as it hath been of many others, to be reſolvable only by the aſſiſtance of the calculation of probabilities (e). I ſhall therefore dwell no

(b) The ideas of numbers, ſo ſimple, ſo eaſily acquired, and to which our wants often refer us, are ſo prodigiouſly limited in certain nations, that they cannot reckon more than three, expreſſing all numbers above three, by the vague expreſſion, A great many.

(c) Of this kind were the people Dampier found in an iſland producing neither tree nor ſhrub, and who lived on the fiſh which the waves drove into their creeks; nor was their language any more than a ſort of clucking noiſe, reſembling that of a turkey-cock.

(d) Whatever may have been affirmed by the ſtoics; Seneca was not fully convinced of the ſpirituality of the ſoul: "Your letter (ſays he to one of his friends) came at an improper time: being delivered to me, when I was taking a delicious walk in the temple of Hope. There I freed myſelf from all doubts with regard to my ſoul's immortality: my imagination, gently warmed by the reaſoning of ſome great men, firmly believed in that immortality, which they promiſe more than they prove. I began to be diſpleaſed with my exiſtence, and to deſpiſe the remains of an unhappy life, when I had opened to myſelf with delight, the gates of eternity; but your letter awakened me, and of ſo pleaſing a dream left me only the regret of knowing it was a dream."

A proof, ſays Mr. Deſlandes, in his critical hiſtory of philoſophy, that formerly neither the immortality, nor the immateriality of the ſoul was believed, is, that in the time of Nero, the people of Rome complained, that the introduction of the new-fangled doctrine of the other world enervated the courage of the ſoldiers, and rendered them timorous; that it deprived the unhappy of their principal conſolation, and added double terror to death, by threatning them with new ſufferings after this life.

(e) It would be impoſſible to obſerve the axiom of Deſcartes, and to acquieſce in evidence only. This axiom is repeated in the ſchools; becauſe it is not ſufficiently underſtood. For Deſcartes, not having placed a ſign, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, at the inn of evidence, every one thinks he has a right of lodging there his opinion. Whoever will be ſatisfied with evidence only can

no longer on this queſtion, but proceeded to my ſubject. I ſay, then, that the Phyſical Senſibility and Memory, or, to ſpeak more exactly, that Senſibility alone, produceth all our ideas, and in effect Memory can be nothing more than

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hardly be ſure of any thing, except his own exiſtence. How could he, for example, be convinced of that of other bodies? For cannot God, by his omnipotence, make the ſame impreſſions on our ſenſes, as the preſence of the objects would excite? And if we grant, that the Deity can do this, how can it be affirmed, that he does not employ his power in this manner, and that the whole univerſe, is nothing more than a meer phænomenon? Beſides, as we are affected in our dreams by the ſame ſenſation we ſhould feel were the object preſent, how can it be proved, that our life is not one continued dream? I would not be underſtood from hence, to deny the exiſtence of bodies, but only to ſhew that we have leſs aſſurance of it than of our own exiſtence. And, as truth is an indiviſible point, we cannot ſay of a certain fact, that it is more or leſs true; it is therefore evident, that if we are more certain of our own exiſtence than of that of other bodies, the exiſtence of the latter is no more than a probability. It is, indeed, a very great probability, and, with regard to the conduct of life, equivalent to evidence; notwithſtanding which, it is only a probability. If then almoſt all our truths may be reduced to probabilities, we could not too highly expreſs our gratitude to the man of genius, who would undertake to conſtruct phyſical, metaphyſical, moral, and political tables, in which ſhould be preciſely marked all the different degrees of probability, and conſequently of belief aſſignable to each opinion.

The exiſtence of bodies, for example, would be placed in the phyſical tables, as the firſt degree of certainty in the following would be determined what wagers may be laid, that the ſun will riſe to-morrow; that he will riſe in ten, in twenty years, &c. In like manner, there would be placed in the moral and political tables, as the firſt degree of certainty, the exiſtence of Rome, or, of London; then that of the heroes, as Cæſar or William the Conqueror; and in this manner, we ſhould deſcend by the ſcale of probability, to the facts of the leaſt certainty; and finally, from the pretended miracles of Mahomet, even down to the prodigies atteſted by ſo many Arabians, but whoſe falſity is nevertheleſs highly probable here below, where liars are ſo common, and prodigies ſo rare.

It would then follow, that men, who differ in ſentiments generally from the impoſſibility of finding proper ſigns to expreſs the different degrees of belief they annex to their opinion, would communicate their ideas to each other with more facility; becauſe they might always, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, refer their ſeveral opinions to ſome particular number in the tables of probabilities.

As the progreſs of the Mind is always ſlow, and the ſeveral diſcoveries in the ſciences have been made at great diſtances of time from one another, it muſt be granted, that if tables of probability were once formed, there would be only ſlight alterations made afterwards, and even thoſe ſucceſſively, which would relate, in conſequence of the diſcoveries made, to the manner of encreaſing or diminiſhing the probability of certain propoſitions, which we call truths; but, in reality, only probabilities more or leſs accumulated. By this means the ſtate of doubting, always inſupportable to the far greater part of mankind would be more eaſily endured. Doubts then would no longer continue vague, becauſe ſubject to calculation, and conſequently capable of valuation; they would be converted into affirmative propoſitions. Then the ſect of Carneades, whoſe doctrine was formerly eſteemed the philoſophy of excellence, being called by the name of elective, would be purged of all thoſe ſlight errors, for which wrangling ignorance has with too much harſhneſs reproached a philoſophical ſect, whoſe dogmas were equally adapted to improve the Mind, and poliſh the manners.

Though this ſect, agreeable to their principles, admitted no truths, yet they admitted at leaſt appearances, and would have us regulate life by thoſe appearances; and that we ſhould rather act when it appeared more eligible, than waſte our time in examination; that

than one of the organs of Phyſical Senſibility. The principle that feels in us muſt neceſſarily be the principle that remembers: ſince to remember, as I ſhall prove hereafter, is properly nothing more than to feel.

When, in conſequence of a ſeries of ideas, or of the concuſſion cauſed in my organ of hearing by certain ſounds, I recollect the appearance of an oak; my interior organs muſt neceſſarily at that time be in the ſame ſituation in which they were when I ſaw that oak. That ſituation of the organs muſt therefore inconteſtibly excite a ſenſation; whence it is evident, that to remember is to feel.

This principle being laid down, I farther ſay, that all the operations of the Mind conſiſt in the power we have of perceiving the reſemblance and difference, the agreement or diſagreement of various objects among themſelves. And this power, being the Phyſical Senſibility itſelf, every thing is reducible to feeling.

In order to be convinced of this truth, let us conſider Nature. She preſents objects to us; thoſe objects have relations both with regard to us and themſelves, the knowledge of thoſe relations conſtitute what we call the Mind, which is more or leſs extenſive as our knowledge in this particular is more or leſs diffuſive. The human Mind aſcends to the knowledge of thoſe relations; but cannot paſs theſe bounds. All the words therefore of which the various languages are compoſed, and which may be conſidered as a collection of the ſigns of all the thoughts of man, recal to us either objects, as the words Oak, Ocean, Sun; or repreſent ideas, namely, the different relations which objects bear to one another; and theſe are either ſimple, as the words, Greatneſs, Littleneſs, or compounded, as Vice, Virtue; or, finally, they expreſs the different relations which objects have with ourſelves, that is, our action upon them, as in the words, I break, I dig, I raiſe; or their impreſſion upon us, as, I am wounded, dazzled, terrified.

If I have before confined the ſignification of the word Idea, uſed in very different acceptations, ſince we equally ſay, the Idea of a tree, and the Idea of virtue, it is becauſe an undetermined ſignification of the expreſſion may ſometimes cauſe us to commit thoſe errors which always flow from an abuſe of words.

The concluſion of what I have hitherto advanced is, that if all the words of different languages were confined to objects, or the relation of thoſe objects, with regard either to us, or one another, the Mind would conſequently conſiſt, in comparing our ſenſations and ideas; that is, in contemplating the reſemblances, and differences, the agreements, and diſagreements, that ſub-

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that we ought to deliberate maturely, when we had time ſufficient for that purpoſe, that the determination might conſequently be more certain; and that a free paſſage might thence be opened in the ſoul for all new truth; an advantage refuſed by the dogmatics. They farther intended, that we ſhould be leſs tenacious of our own opinions; leſs ready to condemn thoſe of others, and conſequently become more ſociable; and in fine, that the habit of doubting, having rendered us leſs irritable by contradiction, ſhould ſtifle in us the moſt fertile ſeeds of hatred amongſt men. We do not here glance at revealed truth; theſe are truths of another order.

ſiſt among them. Judgment therefore is only this very faculty of perceiving, or, at leaſt the declaration of it; and conſequently, all the operations of the Mind are reducible to judgment.

The queſtion being thus properly limited, I ſhall proceed to examine, if Judging be not Feeling. When I judge of the magnitude, or the colour of objects preſented to me, it is evident, that the judgment is formed from the different impreſſions made by thoſe objects on my ſenſes; and therefore may be ſaid, with the greateſt propriety, to be nothing more than a ſenſation. For I can equally ſay, I judge, or I feel, that of two objects, the one, which I call a Fathom, makes a different impreſſion on me, from that of the other, which I call Foot; alſo, that the colour which I call Red acts upon my eyes differently from that which I call Yellow: from whence I conclude, that in all parallel caſes, Judging is the ſame with Feeling.

But ſome will ſay, let us ſuppoſe that we are deſirous to know, whether the ſtrength of the body be preferable to its magnitude; can it then be aſſerted, that judging is nothing more than feeling? I anſwer, Yes; becauſe, to enable me to form a judgment on this ſubject, my memory muſt ſucceſſively retrace to me the pictures of the different ſituations, in which I have acted, during the whole courſe of my life. Conſequently, Judging is ſeeing in thoſe different pictures, that the ſtrength of the body will be oftener of ſervice to me, than its ſize or magnitude. Others may reply, if a judgment is to be formed, whether juſtice is preferable to goodneſs in a king, can it be imagined, that ſuch a judgment is only a ſenſation?

This opinion, hath doubtleſs, at firſt the appearance of a paradox; yet to prove the truth of it, let us ſuppoſe, that a man has the knowledge of what is called Good and Evil; and that he alſo knows, what evil is more or leſs ſo, according as it is more or leſs pernicious to the welfare of ſociety. According to this ſuppoſition, what art muſt a poet or orator employ, to make him perceive, in a more lively manner, that juſtice, preferable in a king to goodneſs, preſerves more citizens for the ſtate?

The orator will preſent three pictures to his imagination: in one he will paint the juſt king, who condemns a criminal, and orders him to execution. In the ſecond, he will exhibit the good king, opening the ſame criminal's priſon, and taking off his fetters. In the third, he will repreſent this very criminal arming himſelf with a poniard, as he quits the priſon, and haſtening to maſſacre fifty citizens. Now, what man, at the ſight of theſe three pictures, will not be convinced, that juſtice, which by the death of one has prevented the death of fifty, is in a king preferable to goodneſs? This judgment, however, is really no more than a ſenſation. In effect, if from a habitude of uniting certain ideas to certain words, we can, as experience proves, by ſtriking the ear with certain ſounds, excite in us nearly the ſame ſenſations that would be excited by the very preſence of the objects; it is evident, that from the diſplay of thoſe three pictures, to judge, that in a king juſtice is preferable to goodneſs, is feeling and ſeeing; that in the firſt picture, only one citizen is immolated, and in the third, fifty are maſſacred; from whence I conclude, that every judgment is nothing more than a ſenſation.

But ſhould this queſtion be ſtarted, muſt we alſo rank in the claſs of Senſations, judgments formed; for example, on the greater or leſs degree of the excel-

excellence of certain methods; ſuch as, that proper for fixing a great number of objects in our memory, that of abſtraction, or that of analyſis?

In order to anſwer this queſtion, we muſt begin by determining the ſignification of this word Method. A method is nothing more than the means we employ to attain ſome end propoſed. Let us ſuppoſe, a perſon intends to place certain objects, or certain ideas in his memory; and that chance ſhould have ſo arranged them there, that the remembrance of one fact, or of one idea, makes him recollect an infinity of other facts, or of other ideas; and that he may from thence have certain objects more readily and deeply engraved in his memory. To infer from thence a judgment, that this order is the beſt, and, to give it the name of Method, ſignifies, that he has exerted leſs efforts of attention, and ſuffered a leſs painful ſenſation, by ſtudying in that order, than in any other. But to remember a painful ſenſation is to feel; it is therefore evident, that in this caſe, Judging is Feeling.

Let us farther ſuppoſe, that in order to prove the truth of certain propoſitions in geometry, and to make them more eaſily conceived by his pupils, a geometrician had determined to make them conſider the lines independently of their breadth and thickneſs; to judge therefore, that this means or method of abſtraction, is more proper to convey to his ſcholars the knowledge of certain geometrical, propoſitions, ſignifies, that leſs efforts of attention will be neceſſary; and that his ſcholars will undergo a leſs painful ſenſation in uſing this method than any other.

Let us ſuppoſe, for a final example, that by ſeparately examining each truth contained in a complicated propoſition, the underſtanding of that propoſition is ſooner attained. Therefore, to judge that the means or method of analyſis is the beſt, is ſaying alſo, that leſs powerful efforts of attention have been made; and conſequently, that a leſs painful ſenſation hath been ſufficient, by particularly conſidering each truth contained in this complicated propoſition, than would have been requiſite, had it been attempted to underſtand them all at once.

The reſult of what I have ſaid, is, that the judgments formed on the means and methods which chance preſents to us, in order to attain a certain end, are, in the ſtricteſt propriety, nothing more than ſenſations. Therefore, in man, all is reducible to feeling.

But how did it happen, ſome may aſk, that hitherto, there has been ſuppoſed in us a faculty of judging, diſtinct from the faculty of feeling? My anſwer is, that we are indebted for that ſuppoſition to a belief, which has hitherto prevailed, of its being impoſſible to explain in any other manner, certain errors of the Mind.

But entirely to remove this difficulty, I am going to ſhew, in the following chapters, that all our falſe judgments and errors have their ſource from two cauſes, which ſuppoſe in us only the faculty of feeling; and conſequently, that it would be of no utility, or rather abſurd, to admit a faculty of judging, which could only explain, what might as well be done without its aſſiſtance. I ſhall therefore, proceed with the ſubject; and I ſay, that all our erroneous judgments are either the effect of our paſſions, or our ignorance.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the errors occaſioned by our paſſions.

THE paſſions lead us into error, becauſe they fix our attention to that particular part of the object they preſent to us, not allowing us to view it on every ſide. A king paſſionately affects the title of Conqueror. Victory, ſays he, calls me to the remoteſt part of the earth: I ſhall fight; I ſhall gain the victory; I ſhall load mine enemy with chains, and the terror of my name, like an impenetrable rampart, will defend the entrance of my empire. Inebriated with this hope, he forgets that fortune is inconſtant; and, that the victor ſhares the load of miſery, almoſt equally with the vanquiſhed. He does not perceive, that the welfare of his ſubjects is only a pretence for his martial frenzy; and that pride alone forges his arms, and diſplays his enſigns: his whole attention is fixed on the pomp of the triumph.

Fear, equally powerful with pride, will produce the ſame effect; it will raiſe ghoſts and phantoms, and diſperſe them among the tombs, and in the darkneſs of the woods, preſent them to the eyes of the affrighted traveller, ſeize on all the faculties of his ſoul, without leaving any one at liberty to reflect on the abſurdity of the motives for ſuch a ridiculous terror.

The paſſions not only fix the attention on particular ſides of the objects they preſent to us; but they alſo deceive us, by exhibiting the ſame objects, when they do not really exiſt. The ſtory of a country clergyman, and an amorous lady, is well known. They had heard, and concluded, that the moon was peopled, and were looking for the inhabitants through their teleſcopes. If I am not miſtaken, ſaid the lady, I perceive two ſhadows; they mutually incline towards each other: doubtleſs they are two happy lovers.------ O fie! madam, replied the clergyman, theſe two ſhadows are the two ſteeples of a cathedral. This tale is our hiſtory, it being common for us to ſee in things what we are deſirous of finding there: on the earth, as in the moon, different paſſions will cauſe us to ſee either lovers or ſteeples. Illuſion is a neceſſary effect of the paſſions, the ſtrength, or force of which, is generally meaſured by the degree of obſcurity into which they lead us. This was well known to a certain lady, who being caught by her lover in the arms of his rival, obſtinately denied the fact of which he had been a witneſs. How! ſaid he, have you the aſſurance------Ah! perfidious creature, cried the lady, it is plain you no longer love me; for you believe your eyes, before all I can ſay. This is equally applicable to all the paſſions, as well as to love. All ſtrike us with the moſt perfect blindneſs. When ambition has kindled a war between two nations, and the anxious citizens aſk one another, the news; what readineſs appears, on one ſide, to give credit to the good; and on the other, what incredulity, with regard to the bad? How often have chriſtians, from placing a ridiculous confidence in monks, denied the poſſibility of the antipodes. There is no century, which has not, by ſome ridiculous affirmation or negation, afforded matter of laughter to the following age. A paſt folly is ſeldom ſufficient to ſhew mankind their preſent folly.

The ſame paſſions, however, which are the germ of an infinity of errors, are alſo the ſources of our knowledge. If they miſlead us, they, at the ſame time, impart to us the ſtrength neceſſary for walking. It is they alone that can rouze us from that ſluggiſhneſs and torpor always ready to ſeize on the faculties of our ſoul.

But as this is not the place for examining the truth of this propoſition, I ſhall paſs to the ſecond cauſe of our errors.

CHAP. III.

Of Ignorance.

WE deceive ourſelves, when we pretend to judge of an object from one ſide only, to which our attention has been fixed by our paſſions. We alſo deceive ourſelves, when we pretend to judge of a ſubject, when, our memory does not contain all the facts, on a compariſon of which, the propriety of our deciſions depend. Not that any perſon is deſtitute of a juſt perception: all have an idea of what they ſee; but by not miſtruſting our ignorance, we are too apt to believe that what we ſee in an object is all that is perceivable in it.

In queſtions of any difficulty, we are to conſider ignorance as the principal cauſe of our errors. To ſhew how eaſily we are, in this caſe, deceived, and how by drawing from their principles, conſequences always juſt, men arrive at concluſions directly oppoſite, I ſhall give as an inſtance, a queſtion a little complicated: ſuch is that of Luxury, which has occaſioned very different judgments according to the light in which it has been conſidered.

The word Luxury, being a vague term, without any fixed meaning, and generally no more than a relative expreſſion; we muſt previouſly fix an adequate idea to the word Luxury, taken in a ſtrict ſenſe; after which a definition muſt be given of Luxury, both with regard to a nation and an individual.

By the word Luxury, we are, in a ſtrict ſenſe, to underſtand all kinds of ſuperfluities. That is, whatever is not neceſſary to a perſon's ſubſiſtance. When the queſtion relates to a policed people, and the individuals of which it is compoſed, the word Luxury, has a very different meaning; it becomes abſolutely relative. The Luxury of a policed nation, is the expending its Wealth on what is called ſuperfluities, by a people with which this nation is compared. This is the caſe of England, with regard to Switzerland.

Luxury, in an individual, is alſo the employment of his riches on what ſhould be called Superfluities, conſidering his ſtation, and the country in which he lives. Such was the luxury of Bourvalais.

Having given this definition of the word, let us ſee under what different appearances national luxury has been conſidered; ſince ſome have accounted

it uſeful and others detrimental to a ſtate. The former have confined their attention to the manufactures, which owe their origin to luxury, and induce a foreign nation, eagerly to exchange its treaſures for the induſtry of the other. They ſee the increaſe of riches bring in its train the increaſe of luxury, and the perfection of arts proper to gratify it. With them, the age of luxury is the æra of the grandeur and power of a ſtate. The plenty of money, ſay they, which it ſuppoſes, and brings into the nation, renders it happy at home and formidable abroad. By money, numerous forces are maintained; magazines erected; arſenals filled with ſtores; and alliances formed and ſupported with powerful princes: in fine, it is by money, that a nation can not only reſiſt, but even rule over others more populous, and conſequently of more real power than itſelf. As luxury renders a nation formidable abroad, ſo it procures every kind of felicity at home. It ſoftens the manners, creates new diverſions, and thus furniſhes a comfortable ſubſiſtence to a competent number of artiſts and labourers. It excites a ſalutary cupidity, which rouzes man from that indolence, that laſſitude, which ſhould be conſidered as one of the moſt cruel diſeaſes of human nature. It diffuſes through the whole, a vivifying heat; cauſes life to circulate through all the members of a ſtate; rouzes induſtry; opens the harbours; builds ſhips; conveys them over the ocean; and makes common to all mankind thoſe productions and riches which covetous nature has concealed in the deep receſſes of the ſea, and the bowels of the earth; or keeps ſeparate in a thouſand different climates. This, I believe, is nearly the point of view in which luxury preſents itſelf to thoſe who conſider it as uſeful to ſtates.

Let us now examine the appearance under which it preſents itſelf to thoſe philoſophers who look on it as the bane of nations.

The happineſs of a people depends upon the national felicity, and the reſpect they inſpire in others. With regard to the firſt, it is our opinion, theſe philoſophers will ſay, that luxury and the wealth it produces in a ſtate, will render the ſubjects happier only in proportion as this wealth is equally divided; ſo that every one may procure thoſe conveniencies of which he ſees himſelf abridged by indigence.

Luxury is not therefore injurious as luxury, but as the effect of a great diſparity in the wealth of individuals (a). Accordingly, luxury is never carried to

(a) Luxury cauſes a circulation of money; it draws it from the coffers where avarice would hoard it: it is luxury, therefore, ſay ſome, that reſtores the equilibre between the fortunes of individuals. But, I anſwer, that it does not produce this effect. Luxury always ſuppoſes a cauſe of inequality of wealth among individuals. And this cauſe, which makes the firſt rich men, muſt, when theſe are ruined by luxury, be reproducing others. Take away this cauſe of the inequality of riches, and luxury will diſappear with it. Nothing of what is called luxury can be ſeen in countries where the fortunes of individuals are nearly equal. I add, that this inequality of riches, being once founded, luxury itſelf is partly the cauſe of the reproduction of luxury: for whoever ruins himſelf by his luxury, transfers the greateſt part of his wealth to thoſe artificers who adminiſter to luxury; and theſe, enriched with the ſpoils of an infinite number of prodigals, become rich in their turn, and afterwards ruin themſelves in the ſame manner. Now that wealth, which

to exceſs, when there is not too great inequality in the diſtribution of riches; it increaſes in proportion, as theſe are confined to fewer individuals, and arrives at its utmoſt height when a nation divides itſelf into two claſſes, one abounding in ſuperfluities, the other wanting neceſſaries.

When it is arrived at this height, the ſtate of a nation is the more melancholy, as it is incurable. How ſhall then any equality be re-eſtabliſhed in the fortunes of individuals? The rich man will have purchaſed extenſive lordſhips; and being able to take advantage of the neceſſities of his neighbours, he will, in a ſhort time, have annexed an infinite number of ſmall farms to his eſtate. A diminution of the number of proprietors increaſes the number of labourers. When theſe are multiplied, ſo that there are more labourers than work, it will be with the workmen as with all kinds of merchandize, which becomes of leſs value in proportion as it becomes more common. Beſides, the rich man, whoſe luxury even exceeds his wealth, is under a neceſſity of lowering the price of labour, and giving the workman no more than is abſolutely neceſſary for a bare ſubſiſtance (b). The latter is obliged, through neceſſity, to accept of it; but in caſe of ſickneſs, or an increaſe of his family, for want of a ſufficiency of wholeſome food, he dies, and incumbers the ſtate with an indigent and deſtitute family. To prevent ſuch calamities, recourſe muſt be had to a new diſtribution of lands; a diſtribution always unjuſt and impracticable. Hence it is evident, that luxury, when it is arrived to a certain pitch, renders it impoſſible to reſtore an equality between the fortunes of individuals. Then the rich, with their wealth, flock to the capitals, as the ſeats of diverſion, and the arts of luxury; while the country remains deſolated, poor, and uncultivated. Seven or eight millions of people languiſh in miſery,

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which from the wrecks of ſo many fortunes, ſpreads itſelf over the country, can be only the leaſt part; as the productions of the earth adapted to the common uſe of mankind, can never exceed a certain price.

It is otherwiſe with regard to thoſe products when they have been manufactured by induſtry; for their value is then whatever fancy pleaſes, and the price becomes exceſſive. Thus luxury neceſſarily keeps money in the hands of its artizans, cauſes a perpetual circulation of it in that claſs of men; and, conſequently, muſt ſupport an inequality of riches among individuals.

(b) It is commonly thought that the country is ruined by ſervices, impoſts, and eſpecially, the poll-tax. Theſe I ſhall readily allow to be very burdenſome; yet it muſt not be imagined, that the ſuppreſſion of this impoſt alone would render the condition of the peaſants entirely happy. In moſt provinces the price of a day's labour is only eight ſols. Now if from theſe eight ſols I deduct the impoſition of the church, that is, near ninety ſundays and holy-days, and perhaps thirty-five days in the year, when the husbandman is ill, without work, or employed in his lord's ſervices; all that remains to him is no more than ſix ſols per day. While he is ſingle, I will ſuppoſe that theſe ſix ſols are ſufficient to anſwer all his expences of food, cloathing, and lodging: on his marrying, theſe ſix ſols will be deficient, as during the firſt years after mariage, his wife will be too much taken up in looking after the children, to aſſiſt him: let us ſuppoſe, that his poll-tax is then entirely remitted, which amounts to five or ſix francs; and thus he gains about a farthing a day more. Now certainly this farthing would make very little alteration in his condition. What then muſt be done to render his condition happy? Make a conſiderable addition to the price of a day's labour. In order to this, the proprietors

misery (c), and five or six thousand riot in an opulence which renders them odious, without augmenting their happiness.

What indeed can the profuse variety of a table add to a person's happiness? Is it not sufficient for him to wait the call of hunger; but he must proportion his exercises, or the length of his airings, to the bad taste of his cook, that he may relish as delicious every food that is not detestible? Besides, does he not by frugality and exercise avoid that train of distempers occasioned by gluttony, irritated by the variety and delicacy of the dishes. Happiness therefore does not depend on the elegance of the table.

Neither does it consist in the richness of dress, or the splendor of equipage. A person of quality appearing in public, dressed in an embroidered suit, and leaning in a brilliant chariot, feels no physical pleasures, and these only are real. At most he is only affected with the pleasure of vanity, of which the privation would possibly be insupportable; though the enjoyment be flat and insipid. Without any addition to his own happiness, the rich man,

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must constantly reside on their estates: then, like their ancestors, they would reward the services of their domestics, by bestowing on them some acres of land. The number of proprietors would insensibly multiply; that of day-labourers decrease; and the latter by becoming more scarce, would set a higher value upon their work.

(c) It is very strange that the nations most celebrated for their luxury and police, should be the very countries where the majority of the inhabitants are more unhappy than the savage nations which are held in such contempt by the civilized. It is a question, whether the condition of a savage be not preferable to that of a peasant? The savage has no prison, no increase of imposts, to fear; no oppressive lord, no tyrannical subdelegate; he is not perpetually mortified and debased, by daily seeing persons infinitely above him in riches and power; without superior, without servitude, more healthy and vigorous than the peasant, because happier; he enjoys the satisfaction of equality, especially of that ineftimable privilege, liberty, so vainly claimed by most nations.

In policed countries, the whole art of government has often consisted in making an infinite number of men subservient to the happiness of a few; in keeping, for this purpose, the multitude under oppression, and in violating all the privileges of humanity they have a right to demand.

But the true end of the legislative office, is the general happiness. Possibly this happiness could not be procured but by again introducing the pastoral life; and possibly the discoveries in legislation bring us back, in this respect, to the point from whence government had its rise. Not that I pretend to decide so nice a question, and which requires the most careful examination: but I own, to me it is very astonishing, that so many forms of government, established at least on a pretence of the public good; that so many laws, so many regulations, should, in most kingdoms, have proved only the instrument of oppression and calamity. Possibly this misfortune can be removed only by returning to manners infinitely more simple. I am well aware, that many attractive pleasures must be then renounced: but if the general good require it, this sacrifice would become a duty. May we not even apprehend that the extreme felicity of some individuals always flows from the calamities of the majority? A truth not unhappily expressed in the two following lines on the savages:

Chez eux tout est commun, chez eux
tout est égal;
Comme ils sont sans palais, ils sont sans
hôpital.

With them all common is, and equal all;
No palace have they, nor a hospital.

by

by displaying his luxury, shocks humanity; and the wretch who, by comparing the rags of poverty to the robe of opulence, imagines that there is the same difference between their happiness as their dress, recals, on this occasion, the painful remembrance of the distresses he endures; and thus deprives himself of the wretch's only comfort, a momentary forgetfulness of his misery.

It is therefore certain, continue these philosophers, that luxury is not productive of the happiness of any; and that too great an inequality of riches among the members of a state implies, that the greatest part of them are wretched. Thus a nation, where luxury has been introduced, is not very happy in itself; let us now see whether it be respected abroad.

The plenty of money, which luxury produces in a state, at first dazzles the imagination. This state is for a time, very powerful; but this advantage, if there can be any advantage independent of the happiness of its members, is, as Mr. Hume observes, only transitory. Riches, like those seas which successively forsake and overflow a thousand different tracts of land, must successively travel through a thousand climates. When, by the beauty of its manufactures, and the perfection of the arts of luxury, a nation has drawn into it the riches of its neighbours, it is evident, that the price of goods, workmanship, and labour, will necessarily fall among these impoverished people; and thence, by clandestinely procuring some manufacturers out of this rich nation, may, by degrees, in their turn, impoverish it, by supplying themselves at a lower price with those goods, which they before imported from their rich neighbours (d). And no sooner is the want of money perceived in a state accustomed to luxury, than it becomes contemptible.

In

(d) What I mention of the commerce of the goods for luxury, must not be applied to all kinds of commerce. The riches brought into a state by the perfection of the manufactures and the arts of luxury, are only temporary, and do not increase the happiness of individuals. But it is very different with regard to the wealth flowing in from the commerce of goods immediately necessary. This commerce suppose an excellent cultivation of the lands, a subdivision of these lands into an infinity of small demesnes, and, consequently, a nearer equality in the partition of riches. I well know that this commerce of necessaries, will, in process of time, occasion a great disproportion in the fortunes of individuals, and introduce luxury. But it will not be impossible, in such a case, to check the progress of luxury. This is certain, that the concentration of riches in a small number of hands proceeds much more slowly, both because the proprietors are at once both cultivators and traders; and because the number of proprietors being greater, and that of day-labourers smaller, these, by reason of their posity, are, as I have already observed in a preceding note, able to prescribe laws for fixing the value of their day's work, and require such wages as will procure a comfortable subsistence for themselves and families. Thus every person has a share of the riches accruing to a state by the traffick of provisions. Nor is this commerce subject to the same vicissitudes as that of the manufactures of luxury. An art or a manufacture easily passes from one country to another; but to overcome the ignorance and sloth of peasants, and prevail on them to undertake the culture of a new commodity, is a work of time. To naturalize this new commodity in a country is attended with great trouble and expence, by which the advantages of trade will almost ever incline to that country which produces this commodity naturally; and where it has, for a long time been cultivated.

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In order to ſurmount theſe difficulties, the only method is to return to a ſimple life; but this both the cuſtoms and laws oppoſe. Accordingly, the epocha of the greateſt luxury of a nation, is generally the epocha preceding its fall and debaſement. The happineſs and apparent power which luxury for a time imparts to nations, may be compared to thoſe violent fevers, from which, during the paroxiſms, the patient derives an aſtoniſhing ſtrength, and which ſeem to augment his powers only to deprive him at once, when the fit is over, both of this ſtrength and his life.

In order to be convinced of this truth, ſay theſe philoſophers, let us conſider, what renders a nation truly reſpectable to its neighbours. Doubtleſs the number and vigour of its members; their love for their country, and their courage and virtue.

If we ſurvey the numbers of the inhabitants of different nations, we ſhall find that the moſt luxurious countries are not the moſt populous. It is well known that Switzerland, in proportion to its extent, is better peopled than Spain, France, or even England.

The expence of men neceſſarily occaſioned by an extenſive trade (e), is not in thoſe countries the ſole cauſe of depopulation; luxury creates a thouſand

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There is, however, a caſe, perhaps imaginary, when the eſtabliſhment of manufactures, and the commerce of the arts of luxury might be eſteemed highly uſeful. This is, when the extent and fertility of a country are not proportionate to the number of its inhabitants. That is, when a ſtate is not able to maintain all its people. In this caſe, a nation, not having the advantage of ſending its people to ſuch a country as America, muſt either ſend colonies to ravage the neighbouring countries, and, as others have done before them, ſettle themſelves in more fertile countries, where they may procure a ſubſiſtence; or erect manufactures, compel the neighbouring nations to trade with them, and give them in exchange the proviſions neceſſary for the ſubſiſtence of a certain number of inhabitants. The laſt is doubtleſs the moſt humane; for whatever the chance of war may be, every colony, whether victor or vanquiſhed, entering a country in a hoſtily manner, certainly occaſions more deſolation, calamities, and evils, than can poſſibly flow from raiſing a kind of tribute, exacted rather by humanity than force.

(e) This expence of men is however ſo great, that the number deſtroyed by our American commerce cannot be thought of without horror. Humanity, which inſpires us with a love for all our fellow-creatures, requires, that with regard to the trade for negroes, I ſhould place in the account of miſfortunes both the death of my countryman, and that of ſo many Africans, ſtimulated to battle by the hope of making priſoners to give in exchange for our goods. If to the number of men ſlain in the wars and dying in their paſſage from Africa to America, be added, that of the negroes, who after they are ſold become victims to the caprices and tyranny of a cruel maſter; and if to this ſum we join the number of thoſe who periſh by fire, ſhipwreck, or the ſcurvy; and laſtly, the number of ſailors who die during their ſtay at St. Domingo, either from diſtempers common to the climate, or the conſequences of debauchery, which is no where more dangerous; every hogſhead of ſugar landed in Europe muſt be allowed to be died with human blood. Now, from a view of the miſeries occaſioned by the culture and exportation of this commodity, who would not refuſe to deprive himſelf of the uſe of it, and renounce a pleaſure, which muſt be purchaſed by the tears and deſtruction of ſo many of our fellow-creatures? But let us remove our eyes from ſo melancholy a ſpectacle, ſo diſgraceful to human nature, and which fills a generous mind with horror.

others, drawing the riches of a nation to the capital, leaving the country in want, favouring arbitrary power, and conſequently the augmentation of ſubſidies; it alſo affords opulent nations an eaſy method of contracting debts (f), which cannot be diſcharged but by loading the people with taxes. Now theſe different cauſes of depopulation, by plunging a whole country into miſery, muſt neceſſarily impair the conſtitution of the body. When was it ever known that a people given to luxury, were robuſt? One part are enervated by pleaſure; and the other emaciated by want.

If a poor or ſavage nation, as the Chevalier de Folard obſerves, have in this reſpect, a great ſuperiority over nations addicted to luxury, it is becauſe a labourer is generally richer in a poor than in a wealthy nation; it is becauſe a Swiſs peaſant is in eaſier circumſtances than a French peaſant (g).

Robuſt bodies are formed only by a ſufficiency of ſimple and wholeſome food, manly exerciſe, not carried to exceſs, and a conſtant habit of bearing the inclemencies of the weather: this the peaſants are inured to, and, conſequently infinitely more proper to bear the fatigues of war than manufacturers, moſt of whom are uſed to a ſedentary life. It is alſo in poor nations that theſe indefatigable armies are formed, which give a turn to the fate of empires.

What oppoſition can be made againſt ſuch armies, by a country abandoned to luxury and indolence? Neither the number nor ſtrength of its inhabitants can intimidate them. It will perhaps be ſaid, that the love of one's country will ſupply the want of numbers and ſtrength. But among ſuch a people, what can produce this love for their country? The labouring people, which makes two thirds of every nation, are wretched: the artificers are without property; and having been taken from the villages, and placed in ſome manufacture or ſhop, and from thence to others of the ſame kind, roving is become familiar to them; and they cannot contract an attachment for any place: and being certain of getting a livelihood any where, they conſider themſelves not as the members of any country, but as citizens of the world.

Such a people, therefore, will not be long able to diſtinguiſh themſelves by their courage; becauſe courage is generally the effect of the vigour of the body, that blind reliance on our own ſtrength which conceals from men half the danger to which they expoſe themſelves: or it flows from a ſtrong patriotic zeal, which deſpiſes dangers when employed in the ſervice of its country. But luxury in proceſs of time dries up theſe two ſources of courage (h). Poſſibly avarice might open a third, had the barbarous cuſtoms of former ages been ſtill continued, when the vanquiſhed were carried into ſlavery, and cities abandoned to pillage.

But

(f) Holland, England, and France, are overwhelmed with debts, while Switzerland does not owe a penny.

(g) It is not ſufficient, ſays Grotius, that the people be provided with things abſolutely neceſſary to their preſervation and life; it muſt be rendered eaſy and pleaſant to them.

(h) In conſequence of this a military genius has always been conſidered as incompatible with a commercial. Not that they are abſolutely irreconcileable; but that this is one of the moſt difficult problems in politics. Thoſe who have hitherto written on trade, have treated it as an abſtracted queſtion. They did

But the ſoldier being no longer ſtimulated by this motive, he can now act only from a principle of honour. Now the deſire of honour is extinguiſhed when the people become inflamed with the love of riches (i). It is to no purpoſe to ſay, that what opulent nations loſe in virtue and courage, they gain in happineſs and pleaſures. A Spartan (k) was equally happy with a Perſian, and the firſt Romans, whoſe only reward for courage was a donation of ſome proviſions, would not have envied the ſplendour of Craſſus.

Caius Duillius, who by an act of the ſenate was every evening conducted back to his houſe by a company of men carrying flambeaux and playing on flutes, was as well pleaſed with this ſimple concert, as we are with the fineſt ſonata. But granting that opulent nations may procure themſelves ſome conveniences unknown to thoſe of a poor ſtate, who will enjoy thoſe conveniencies? A handful of men of wealth and power, who, conſidering themſelves as the whole nation, conclude from their private eaſe, that the peaſants are happy. But ſhould theſe conveniences be diffuſed among a greater number of the inhabitants, is this an advantage to be compared with theſe accruing to a poor ſtate, from the courage, hardineſs, temperance, and an abhorrence of ſlavery in its inhabitants? Nations among whom luxury have got footing, fall, ſooner or later, victims to deſpotiſm. They offer their faint and trembling hands to the chains which tyranny has forged for them. How ſhall they avoid it? In ſuch nations ſome live in voluptuouſneſs, and voluptuouſneſs is deſtitute both of thought and foreſight; others languiſh in penury, and pinching want: and entirely abſorbed in finding methods for its relief, never look ſo high as liberty. In a deſpotic government the riches of the nation are at the diſpoſal of its maſter; in a republic, they are the property of men of power, or of their brave neighbours. "Bring us your treaſures," might the Romans have ſaid to the Carthaginians, "They belong to us: Rome and Carthage "both aimed at riches, but purſued different methods to attain their ends. "While you encouraged the induſtry of your people, erected manufactures, "covered the ſea with your ſhips, attempted the diſcovery of uninhabited "countries, and brought to Carthage the gold of Spain and Africa; we were, "more wiſely, promoting courage and hardineſs, enuring our ſoldiers to

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did not ſufficiently perceive, that every thing has its relatives; and that in government there can properly be no abſtracted queſtion; that here the merit of an author conſiſts in connecting together all the parts of the adminiſtration; and that a ſtate is a machine moved by different ſprings, the force of which is to be increaſed or diminiſhed, according to the reciprocal action of thoſe ſprings, and the effect intended to be produced.

(i) There is no neceſſity for obſerving, that in this reſpect luxury is more dangerous to a continental than an inſular nation; ſhips being their ramparts, and ſeamen their ſoldiers.

[k] When the valour of the Spartans was once mentioned with great applauſe in preſence of Alcibiades, "I ſee nothing re-"markable in this, ſaid he; for conſidering "the wretched life they lead, it ſhould be "their peculiar buſineſs to die." This ſarcaſm fell from the mouth of a young man brought up in luxury: but he was miſtaken; Lacedemon did not in the leaſt envy the happineſs of Athens: which made an antient ſay, it was better to live like the Spartans under good laws, than like the Sybarites under fragrant bowers.

"the

" the fatigues of war, well knowing that the induſtrious man labours only " for the brave. The time for entering on poſſeſſion is now arrived: De- " liver up to us thoſe treaſures you are not able to defend." The Romans did not indeed ſpeak in this manner; but their conduct, ſufficiently proved, that they were animated with the ſame ſentiments. Why ſhould not the poverty of Rome have been ſuperior to the opulence of Carthage, and in this reſpect maintained the advantage which almoſt all poor nations have had over the wealthy? Did not the frugal Lacedemon triumph over the wealthy and commercial Athens? Did not the frugal Romans trample on the golden ſcepters of Aſia? Were not Egypt, Phœnicia, Tyre, Rhodes, Genoa, and Venice, either ſubdued or humbled, by nations whom they termed Barbarians? And who knows but one day the flouriſhing ſtate of Holland, actually leſs happy than Switzerland, will oppoſe an invader with a leſs obſtinate reſiſtance? Such is the point of light in which luxury is ſeen by thoſe philoſophers, who have conſidered it as the bane of nations.

The concluſion of the premiſes is, that men though they have a clear view of the objects before them, and draw juſt conſequences from their principles, yet their reſults are often contradictory; becauſe they do not contain in their memory all the objects, on a compariſon of which the truths they ſeek muſt depend.

It is, I think, needleſs to ſay, that in ſtating the queſtion of Luxury under two different aſpects, I do not pretend to determine whether luxury be uſeful or detrimental to ſtates; an accurate ſolution of this moral problem would require details foreign to my intended purpoſe. All I intended by this inſtance was to ſhew, that in complicated queſtions, when our judgments are not biaſſed by our paſſions, ignorance alone is the cauſe of our errors. That is, by imagining that the ſide we view of an object is all that can be ſeen in that object.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Abuſe of Words.

ANother cauſe of error, and which is alſo a branch of ignorance, is the abuſe of words, and the want of clearneſs in the ideas annexed to them. This ſubject has been ſo happily diſcuſſed by Mr. Locke, that, if I undertake to examine it, the conveniency of thoſe readers who are not ſufficiently acquainted with the work of that philoſopher is my only motive,

Deſcartes had before Locke obſerved that the Peripateticks, intrenching themſelves behind the obſcurity of words, were not unlike a blind man, who, in order to be a match for his clear-ſighted antagoniſt, ſhould draw him into a dark cavern. Now, added he, if this man can introduce light into the cavern, and compel the Peripateticks to fix clear ideas to their words, the victory is his own. In imitation of Deſcartes and Locke, I ſhall ſhew that, both in metaphyſics and morality, the abuſe of words, and the ignorance

of their true import, is a labyrinth in which the greateſt geniuſes have loſt themſelves; and in order to ſet this particular in a clear light, inſtance, in ſome of thoſe words which have given riſe to the longeſt and ſharpeſt diſputes among philoſophers: ſuch in metaphyſics, are Matter, Space, and Infinite.

It has at all times been alternately aſſerted that Matter felt, or did not feel, and given riſe to diſputes equally loud and vague. It was very late before it came into the diſputants heads, to aſk one another, what they were diſputing about, and to annex a preciſe idea to the word Matter? Had they at firſt fixed the meaning of it, they would have perceived, if I may uſe the expreſſion, that men were the creators of Matter; that Matter was not a being; that in nature there were only individuals to which the name of Body had been given; and that this word Matter could import no more than the collection of properties common to all bodies. The meaning of this word being determined, all that remained was to know, whether extent, ſolidity, and impenetrability, were the only properties common to all bodies; and whether the diſcovery of a power, ſuch for inſtance as attraction, might not give riſe to a conjecture that bodies had ſome properties hitherto unknown, ſuch as that of ſenſation, which though evident only in the organized members of animals, might yet be common to all individuals? The queſtion being reduced to this, it would have appeared, that, if ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is impoſſible to demonſtrate that all bodies are abſolutely inſenſible, no man, unleſs inſtructed by a particular revelation, can decide the queſtion otherwiſe than by calculating and comparing the veriſimilitude of this opinion with that of the contrary.

To bring therefore this diſpute to an iſſue, there was no neceſſity for erecting different ſyſtems of the world, of loſing one's ſelf in the combination of poſſibilities, and exhauſting the genius in thoſe prodigious efforts which have terminated, and in reality could not but have terminated in errors, more or leſs ingenious. Indeed (let me be allowed this reflection) if we are to avail ourſelves as much as poſſible from obſervation, we muſt walk only by its ſide, ſtop at the very inſtant when it leaves us, and nobly dare to be ignorant of what is not yet to be known.

Inſtructed by the errors of great men who have gone before us, we ſhould be ſenſible, that our obſervations, however multiplied and concentrated, are ſcarce ſufficient to form one of thoſe partial ſyſtems comprehended in the general ſyſtem; and that it is from the depths of imagination, that the ſeveral ſyſtems of the univerſe have hitherto been drawn; and as our informations of remote countries are always imperfect, ſo the informations philoſophers have of the ſyſtem of the world are alſo defective. With a great genius and a multitude of combinations, the products of their labours will be only fictions, till time and chance ſhall furniſh them with a general fact, to which all others may be referred.

What I have ſaid of the word Matter, I ſay alſo of Space. Moſt of the philoſophers have made a being of it; and the ignorance of the true ſenſe of the word has occaſioned long diſputes (a). They would have been greatly ſhortened by annexing a clear idea to this word; for then the ſages would

(a) See the diſpute between Leibnitz and Clarke.

have

have agreed, that Space, conſidered in bodies, is what we call extenſion; that we owe the idea of a void, which partly compoſes the idea of Space, to the interval ſeen betwixt two lofty mountains; an interval which being filled only by air, that is by a body which at a certain diſtance makes no ſenſible impreſſion on us, muſt have given us an idea of a vacuum; being nothing more than a power of repreſenting to ourſelves mountains ſeparated from each other, and the intervening diſtances not being filled by other bodies.

With regard to the idea of Infinite, comprehended alſo within the idea of Space, I ſay that we owe this idea of Infinite only to the power which a man ſtanding on a plain has of continually extending its limits, the boundary of his imagination not being determinable: the abſence of limits is therefore the only idea we can form of Infinite. Had philoſophers, previouſly to their giving any opinion on this ſubject, determined the ſignification of the word Infinite, I am inclined to believe, they would have adopted the above definition, and not ſpent their time in frivolous diſputes. To the falſe philoſophy of former ages, our groſs ignorance of the true ſignification of words is principally owing; as the art of abuſing them made up the greateſt part of that philoſophy. This art, in which the whole ſcience of the ſchools conſiſted, confounded all ideas; and the obſcurity it threw on the expreſſions, generally diffuſed itſelf over all the ſciences, eſpecially morality.

When the famous M. de la Rochefoucault, ſaid, that Self-love is the principle of all our actions, what invectives, occaſioned by the ignorance of the word Self-love, were thrown out againſt that illuſtrious author! Self-love was conſidered as pride and vanity; and therefore M. Rochefoucault was ſaid to conſider vice as the ſource of all the virtues. Yet it was eaſy to perceive, that Self-love was nothing more than a ſentiment implanted in us by nature; that in every individual this ſentiment became vice or virtue, according to his diſpoſitions and paſſions; and that Self-love, differently modified, was equally productive of pride and modeſty.

The knowledge of theſe ideas would have ſecured M. de la Rochefoucault from the reproach ſo often thrown upon him, that he ſaw human nature through too gloomy a medium. He ſaw it in its true light. I own that a clear view of the indifference of almoſt all men concerning us is a mortifying ſpectacle to our vanity: but, after all, men muſt be conſidered as they are. To be offended at the effects of their Self-love is to complain of the ſhowers of ſpring, the heats of ſummer, the rains of autumn, and the froſts of winter.

In order to love mankind, little muſt be expected from them. In order to view their faults without aſperity, we muſt accuſtom ourſelves to forgiveneſs; to a ſenſe that indulgence is a juſtice which frail humanity has a right to require from wiſdom. Now nothing has a greater tendency to diſpoſe us to indulgence, to cloſe our hearts againſt hatred, and open them to the principles of a humane and mild morality, than a profound knowledge of the human heart; and this knowledge Mr. Rochefoucault poſſeſſed. Accordingly the wiſeſt men have always been the moſt indulgent. What beautiful maxims of humanity are ſcattered through their works! It was the ſaying of Plato, Live with your inferiors and domeſtics as with unfortunate friends. "Muſt I always, ſaid an Indian philoſopher, hear the rich crying out, Lord "deſtroy all who take from us the leaſt parcel of our poſſeſſions; while the

" poor man, with a plaintive voice and eyes lifted up to heaven, cries, Lord " give me a part of the goods thou dealeſt out in ſuch profuſion to the rich; " and if others leſs happy deprive me of a part, inſtead of imprecating thy " vengence, I ſhall conſider theſe thefts in the ſame manner as in ſeed-time " we ſee the doves ranging over the fields in queſt of their food."

However, if the word Self-love, by being miſunderſtood, raiſed ſuch an oppoſition to M. Rochefoucault, what diſputes, and of much greater importance, have not been occaſioned by the word Liberty! Diſputes which might have been eaſily decided, had all men been ſuch friends to truth as father Malebranche, and agreed with that able divine in his Premotion Phyſique, that Liberty is a myſtery. When urged on this queſtion, he uſed to ſay, I am forced inſtantly to ſtop ſhort. Not that it is impoſſible to form an adequate idea of the word Liberty, taken in the common acceptation. A man at liberty is a perſon neither in chains, under confinement, nor intimidated like a ſlave by the fear of puniſhment. In this ſenſe, the liberty of man conſiſts in the free exerciſe of his power. I ſay of his power, becauſe, to conſider our inability of ſoaring to the clouds like the eagle, of living under the water like the whale, of making ourſelves king or pope, as a want of liberty, would be ridiculous. Thus we have an adequate idea of the word Liberty, in a common acceptation. But not when the word Liberty is applied to the will. What then is Liberty? Nothing more can be underſtood by it than the free power of willing, or not willing a thing. But this power would ſuppoſe that there could be wills without a motive, and conſequently effects without a cauſe. And it would follow, that we could equally wiſh ourſelves good and evil; a ſuppoſition abſolutely impoſſible. In fact, if the deſire of pleaſure be the true principle of all our thoughts, and of all our actions; if all men really tend towards their true or apparent happineſs, it will follow, that all our wills are no more than the effect of this tendency. In this ſenſe, therefore, no adequate idea can be annexed to this word Liberty. But it will be ſaid, If we are under a neceſſity of purſuing happineſs wherever we diſcern it, we are at leaſt at liberty in making choice of the means for procuring our happineſs (b). Yes, I anſwer; but then Liberty is only a ſynonimous term for Knowledge. The more or leſs a perſon underſtands of the law, or the more or leſs able the couſellor is by whom he is directed in his affairs, the more or leſs elegible will be his meaſures. But whatever his conduct be, the deſire of happineſs will always induce him to take thoſe meaſures which appear to him the beſt calculated to promote his intereſt, his diſpoſitions, his paſſions, and in fine, whatever he accounts his happineſs.

How can the problem of liberty be philoſophically ſolved, if, as Mr. Locke has proved, we are the diſciples of friends, parents, books, and, in

(b) There are ſtill ſome who conſider the ſuſpenſion of the mind as a proof of Liberty. They are not aware, that in volition ſuſpenſion is no leſs neceſſary than precipitancy. When, for want of conſideration, we have drawn on ourſelves ſome misfortune, Self-love renders ſuſpenſion abſolutely neceſſary. The word Deliberation is equally miſtaken. We conceive, for inſtance, that while we are chuſing between two pleaſures nearly equal, that we are deliberating. But what we conſider as Deliberation is only the ſlowneſs with which the heavier of two weights nearly equal, makes one of the ſcales of a balance ſubſide.

fine,

fine, all the objects that ſurround us? All our thoughts and wills muſt then be either the immediate effects, or neceſſary conſequences of the impreſſions we have received.

Thus no idea can be formed of the word Liberty, when applied to the will(c). It muſt be conſidered as a myſtery; and we may well cry out with St. Paul, O the depth! and allow that it is a ſubject only proper for theology; and that a philoſophical treatiſe on Liberty would be a treatiſe on effects without cauſes.

Thus we ſee, that an ignorance of the true ſignification of words often proves an eternal ſource of diſputes and calamities. Not to mention the effuſion of blood which theological feuds and diſputes have cauſed, diſputes almoſt always founded on the abuſe of words; what calamities and misfortunes have not this ignorance been productive of, and into what errors has it not plunged nations!

Theſe errors are multiplied beyond what is commonly thought. The ſtory of a Swiſs * is well known. He was poſted at one of the doors of the Tuileries, with ſtrict orders not to ſuffer any perſon to come in A citizen comes up, and offers to enter. There is no going in, ſays the Swiſs. I do not want to go in, anſwers the citizen, but only to go out over the Pont-royal. If you deſire only to go out, replied the Swiſs, You may paſs on (d). Could it be thought,

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(c) "Liberty, ſay the Stoics, is a chi- "mera. For want of knowing the motives, "collecting the circumſtances, by which "we are determined to act in a cer- "tain manner, we think ourſelves free. "Can it be thought, that man has a ſelf-de- "termining power? Is he not rather impel- "led and determined by external objects, "and their infinite combinations? Is his "will a vague and independent faculty, "acting abitrarily and without choice? "It acts either in conſequence of judgment, "an act of the underſtanding, repreſenting "to him that ſuch a thing is more advan- "tageous to his intereſt than any other; or, "independently of this act, the circum- "ſtances in which a perſon finds himſelf, in- "cline and force the will to take a certain "direction; and he then flatters himſelf that "he turned that way freely, though he could "not well turn any other way." Hiſtoire "critique de la Philoſophie.

* The guards of the king of France are all Switzers.

(d) If, ſays Montagne, at ſeeing a chancellor in his robe, his ample wig, and ſedate countenance, we can hardly form a more diverting image to the fancy, than this ſame chancellor conſummating marriage; poſſibly ſomething, not leſs a ſubject of laughter, is the ſollicitous air, the important and ſolemn gravity with which certain great men ſit in the divan only to deliberate like the Swiſs. If you deſire only to go out you may paſs on. The application of theſe words are ſo eaſy and frequent, that the ſagacity of the reader in this particular may be depended on, and he may depend on finding every where Swiſs centinels.

I cannot here forbear relating a pleaſant particular, being the anſwer of an Engliſh nobleman to a miniſter of ſtate. The miniſter was ſaying to ſome courtier, There can be nothing more ridiculous than the manner in which the council of ſtate aſſemble in ſome Negroe nations. In the council-chamber are placed twelve large jars, half full of water. Twelve counſellors of ſtate enter naked; and ſtalking along with great gravity, each leaps into his jar, and immerſes himſelf up to his chin; and in this pretty attitude, they deliberate on the national affairs. You do not ſmile, continued the miniſter, addreſſing himſelf to a noble lord who ſat next him. Smile! no, anſwered his lordſhip, I ſee every day things more ridiculous than that. Pray what? returned the miniſter. A country, replied the nobleman, where the jars alone ſit in council.

that this tale is the history of the people of Rome? Cæsar appears in the Forum with an intention of being crowned; and the Romans, for want of annexing precise ideas to the word Royalty, made no difficulty of granting him, under the title of Imperator, what they would not hear of under that of Rex.

What I have said of the Romans is, in general, applicable to all divans and councils of princes. Among nations, as among sovereigns, there is not one which the abuse of words has not plunged into some gross error. To avoid this snare, Leibnitz directs a philosophical language to be formed, determining the precise signification of every word. We should then understand one another, communicate our ideas with precision; disputes which are rendered perpetual by the abuse of words would be brought to an issue; and in all sciences, men would soon be obliged to adopt the same principles.

But the execution of so desirable a scheme is perhaps impossible. Languages owe their origin to necessity, not to philosophers; and necessity here is easily satisfied. Afterwards some false ideas were annexed to certain words; then these ideas and words were combined and compared with one another. Every new combination has produced a new error; these errors have increased, and in their increase become so complicated, that now, without infinite labour and application, the source of them cannot be traced. It is with languages as with an algebraic calculation: at first some errors creep into it; these are not perceived; the calculation is continued from step to step, till we arrive at consequences absolutely ridiculous. The absurdity is perceived; but how shall we find the place of the first error? This requires the repetition and proofs of a great variety of calculations. Unhappily there are few capable of undertaking it, and still fewer who will submit to the drudgery, especially when the authority of men in power opposes this verification.

Thus have I shewn the true causes of our erroneous judgments. I have demonstrated, that all the errors of the mind have their source, either in the passions, or in ignorance, either of certain facts, or the true import of words. Error therefore is not essentially annexed to the human mind; our false judgments are the effects of accidental causes, which do not suppose in us a faculty of perception. Error, therefore, is only an accident; and therefore it follows, that all men have a sound understanding.

These principles being admitted, nothing will oppose my asserting, that to judge, as I have already proved, is properly nothing more than to perceive. And the general conclusion of this discourse is, that the Mind may be considered, either as the faculty productive of our thoughts, and in this sense it is nothing more than sensibility and memory; or the Mind may be considered as an effect of these faculties; and, in this sense, the Mind is only an assemblage of thoughts, and in every person may be subdivided into as many parts as he has ideas.

These are the true aspects under which the mind appears, considered in itself. Let us now consider the Mind, relatively to society.

ESSAY II.

Of the Mind relatively to Society.

CHAP. I.

SCIENCE is only the remembrance of the facts or ideas of others. The Mind, as diſtinguiſhed from Science, is therefore an aſſemblage of new ideas of whatever kind.

This definition of the Mind is preciſe. It is even very inſtructive to a philoſopher; but cannot be generally adopted: a definition for the public muſt be ſuch as will enable them to compare different underſtandings, and to judge of their force and comprehenſion. But if the above definition were admitted, how would the public meaſure the extent of a perſon's underſtanding? Who could lay before them an exact liſt of his ideas; and how ſhall ſcience and underſtanding be diſtinguiſhed?

Suppoſe I claim the diſcovery of an idea already known; the public, to be convinced whether the title of ſecond inventor belongs to me, muſt previouſly know what I have read, ſeen, and heard; a knowledge, which it neither can, nor will acquire. Beſides, according to this impoſſible hypotheſis, that the public could have an exact enumeration of the quantity and quality of a perſon's ideas; I ſay, that in conſequence of this enumeration, the public would be often obliged to claſs among geniuſes, perſons whom it denies to be men of wit; and ſuch in general are all artificers.

However frivolous an art may appear, yet it is ſuſceptible of infinite combinations. When Marcel, with his hand placed on his forehead, his eyes fixed, his body without motion, and in the attitude of profound meditation, on ſeeing a young lady dance, cries out, What variety in a minuet! doubtleſs, this dancing-maſter then perceived in the manner of bending, riſing, and performing the ſteps, elegancies inviſible to common eyes (a); and therefore his exclamation is no farther ridiculous than in the too great importance it places on trifles. Now if the art of dancing includes ſo great a number of ideas and combinations, who knows, whether the art of declamation does not ſuppoſe in the actreſs, who excels in it, as many ideas as a politician employs in forming a ſyſtem of government?

If we conſult our beſt romances, who will affirm, that in the geſtures, dreſs, and ſtudied ſpeeches of a perfect coquet, there is not as many combina-

(a) This dancing-maſter pretends to know a perſon's temper from his gait and air. A foreigner coming once into his dancing-ſchool, Marcel aſked him, What countryman are you? I am an Engliſhman.——You an Engliſhman! replied Marcel; You a native of that iſland where the people ſhare in the public adminiſtration, and make a part of the ſupreme power! No, ſir, that down look, that air of timidity, that effeminate gait, tell me you are only the titled ſlave of ſome elector.

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tions and ideas as any ſyſtem of the world requires; and that, Le Couvreur, and Ninon de l'Enclos were not, though of very different kinds, as great geniuſes as Ariſtotle and Solon?

I do not pretend to give a ſtrict demonſtration of this propoſition. I only intend to ſhew, that however ridiculous it may appear, no perſon living can ſolve it. Deceived by our ignorance we too often conſider the boundaries which that ignorance gives to an art, as its Ne plus ultra. But ſuppoſing that, in this reſpect, the public could be undeceived; I ſay, that the cleareſt evidence will never alter its manner of judgment. It will never meaſure its eſteem for an art by the greater or ſmaller number of combinations neceſſary for proceeding in it. 1. Becauſe there is no ſuch thing as enumerating theſe combinations. 2. Becauſe it will conſider the Mind only in that light in which it is of importance to know it, viz. as relating to ſociety. Now conſidered in this point of light, I ſay, that the Mind is no more than an aſſemblage, more or leſs numerous, not only of new ideas, but alſo of ſuch as are intereſting to the public; and that the reputation of a man of wit does not ſo much depend upon the number and delicacy of his ideas as on the happy choice of them.

In effect, if the combinations of cheſs be infinite, and there is no excelling in it without forming a great number; why are not the diſtinguiſhed players at cheſs honoured by the public with the title of great geniuſes? Becauſe their ideas are of no uſe to it, either with regard to entertainment or inſtruction, and conſequently that it has no intereſt to eſteem them; and intereſt (b) preſides over all our deciſions.

If the public has overlooked thoſe errors, the invention of which ſometimes implies more combinations and genius than the diſcovery of a truth; and if it eſteems Locke more than Malebranche, it is becauſe it always meaſures its eſteem by its intereſt. In what other balance ſhould it weigh the merit of men's ideas? Every individual judges of things and perſons, by the agreeable or diſagreeable impreſſions he receives from them; and the public is no more than an aſſemblage of all the individuals; therefore it cannot fail of making its intereſt the rule of its deciſions.

This point of view in which I examine the underſtanding, is I believe the only one wherein it ſhould be conſidered. There is no other method of valuing each idea, of fixing the uncertainty of our judgments on this point, and, in fine, of diſcovering the cauſe of the amazing diverſity of men's opinions with regard to the mind; a diverſity abſolutely depending on the difference of the paſſions and ideas, their prejudices and inclinations, and conſequently of their intereſts.

It would indeed be very ſtrange, that the general intereſt (c) ſhould fix a value on the different actions of men, and give the appellations of vicious or lawful, as they were uſeful, detrimental, or indifferent to the public, and

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(b) The word Intereſt is generally confined to the love of money; but the intelligent reader will perceive that I uſe it in a more extenſive ſenſe; and that I apply it in general to whatever may procure us pleaſure or exempt us from pain.

(c) It is perhaps needleſs to obſerve that I here ſpeak as a politician, not as a divine.

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that this ſame intereſt ſhould not have been the ſole diſpenſer of the eſteem or contempt annexed to the ideas of men.

Ideas, like actions, may be divided into three different claſſes.

Uſeful ideas: and, taking this expreſſion in its moſt extenſive ſenſe, I underſtand by it, every idea adapted to our inſtruction or entertainment.

Detrimental ideas, are thoſe which make a contrary impreſſion on us.

Indifferent ideas: by theſe I mean all which, for want of an intrinſic agreeableneſs, or by being rendered too familiar, make very little impreſſion on us. Such ideas have hardly any exiſtence; and can only, if I may uſe the expreſſion, be termed indifferent for an inſtant. Their duration, or ſucceſſion, by which they become tedious, ſoon reduces them to the claſs of detrimental ideas.

In order to ſhew how pregnant with truth this method of conſidering the Mind is, I ſhall apply ſucceſſively the foregoing principles to the action and ideas of men; and prove, that at all times, and in all countries, both with regard to morality and genius, perſonal intereſt alone, dictates the judgment of individuals; while general intereſt dictates that of nations; and conſequently, that in the public, as in individuals, it is always love and gratitude that praiſes, and hatred and revenge that depreciates.

In order to demonſtrate this truth, and clearly ſhew the exact and perpetual ſimilarity in our manner of judging either the actions or ideas of men, I ſhall conſider Probity, and the Mind, or Underſtanding, in different reſpects, and relatively, 1. To an individual. 2. To a ſmall ſociety. 3. To a nation. 4. To different ages and countries. 5. To the whole univerſe: and in theſe inquiries, always taking experience for my guide, ſhall prove, that in every point of view, intereſt is the only judge of Probity and the Underſtanding.

CHAP. II.

Of Probity relative to an individual.

IT is not real Probity; that is Probity, with regard to the public, that I conſider in this chapter, but merely Probity, conſidered relative to each individual.

In this point of view, I ſay, that each individual calls Probity in another only the habitude of actions which are uſeful to him: I ſay habitude, becauſe it is not one ſingle honeſt action, more than one ſingle ingenious idea, that will gain us the title of Virtuous and witty. There is not that penurious wretch on earth which has not once behaved with generoſity; nor a liberal perſon who has not once been parſimonious; no villain who has not done a good action; no perſon ſo ſtupid who has not uttered one ſmart ſentence; and, in fine, no man who, on inſpecting certain actions of his life, will not ſeem poſſeſſed of all the oppoſite virtues and vices. A greater uniformity in the behaviour of men would ſuppoſe in them a continuity of attention which they are incapable

of; differing from one another only more or leſs. The man of abſolute uniformity has no exiſtence; ſo that no perfection, either with regard to vice or virtue, is to be found on the earth.

It is therefore to the habitude of actions advantageous to him, that an individual gives the name of Probity: I ſay of actions, becauſe we cannot judge of intentions. How is it poſſible? It is ſeldom or never that action is the effect of a ſentiment; we ourſelves are often ignorant of the motives by which we are determined. A rich man beſtows a comfortable ſubſiſtence on a worthy man reduced to poverty. Doubtleſs he does a good action; but is this action ſimply the effect of a deſire of rendering a man happy? Pity, the hopes of gratitude, vanity itſelf; all theſe different motives ſeparately, or aggregately, may they not, unknown to himſelf, have determined him to that commendable action? Now if a man be, in general, ignorant himſelf of the motives of his generous action, how can the public be acquainted with them? Thus it is only from the actions of men, that the public can judge of their probity. A man, for inſtance, has twenty degrees of paſſion for virtue; but he has thirty degrees of love for a woman; and this woman would inſtigate him to be guilty of murder. Upon this ſuppoſition, it is certain, that this perſon is nearer guilt than he, who with only ten degrees of paſſion for virtue, has only five degrees of love for ſo wicked a woman. Hence I conclude, that of two men, the more honeſt in his actions has ſometimes the leſſer paſſion for virtue.

Every philoſopher alſo agrees, that the virtue of men greatly depends on the circumſtances in which they are placed. Virtuous men have too often ſunk under a ſtrange ſeries of unhappy events.

He who will warrant his virtue in every poſſible ſituation, is either an impoſtor or a fool; characters equally to be miſtruſted.

After determining the idea I affix to this word Probity, conſidered in relation to every individual, we muſt, to aſſure ourſelves of the propriety of this definition, have recourſe to obſervation; and this will inform us, that there are men, whom a happy diſpoſition, a ſtrong deſire of glory and eſteem, inſpire with the ſame love for juſtice and virtue, which men in general have for riches and honours.

The actions perſonally advantageous to theſe virtuous men are ſo truly juſt, that they tend to promote the general welfare, or, at leaſt not to leſſen it.

But the number of theſe men is ſo ſmall, that I only mention them in honour of humanity. And the moſt numerous claſs, which alone comprehends the far greater part of mankind, is that of men ſo entirely devoted to their own intereſt, that they never conſider the welfare of the whole. Concentrated, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, in their own happineſs (a), theſe men call thoſe actions

(a) Our hatred or love is an effect of the good or harm we have received. "Among "the ſavages, ſays Hobbes, the only wick-"ed man is the robuſt; and, in a civilized "ſtate, the man in power." The ſtrong man, however, conſidered in theſe two ſenſes, is not more wicked than weak. This Hobbes was aware of: but he knew that the epithet of Wicked is applied only to thoſe whoſe wickedneſs is formidable. The anger and blows of a child are often thought engaging in him; but thoſe of a ſtrong man provoke; his blows hurt, and he is called a brute.

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only honeſt, which are advantageous to themſelves. A judge acquits a criminal, a miniſter prefers an unworthy perſon; yet both are juſt, if thoſe they have favoured may be credited. But ſhould the judge puniſh, and the miniſter refuſe, the criminal and the party denied, will always conſider them as unjuſt.

If the monks, who, during the firſt dynaſty, were intruſted to write the lives of our kings, have only given thoſe of their benefactors, indicating the other reigns only with this words, NIHIL FECIT; and if they have given the name of Slothful kings to ſome princes truly worthy of eſteem; it is becauſe a monk is a man, and every man, in his judgment, conſults only his own intereſt.

The chriſtians, who juſtly branded with the name of barbarity and guilt the cruelties inflicted on them by the pagans, did not they give the name of zeal to the cruelties they, in their turn, inflicted on thoſe ſame pagans? It will, on examination, be found, that there is not a crime but is placed among honeſt actions, by the ſocieties to which this crime is advantageous; nor an action of public benefit that is not cenſured by ſome particular ſociety to which it is detrimental.

In effect, what man, if he ſacrifices the pride of ſtiling himſelf more virtuous than others to the pride of being more ſincere; and if, with a ſcrupulous attention, he ſearches all the receſſes of his ſoul, will he not perceive that his virtues and vices are wholly owing to the different modifications of perſonal intereſt (b); that all equally tend to their happineſs; that it is the diverſity of the paſſions and taſtes, of which ſome are agreeable and others contrary to the public intereſt, which terms our actions either virtues or vices? Inſtead of deſpiſing the vicious man, we ſhould pity him, rejoice in our own happy diſpoſition, thank heaven for not having given us any of thoſe taſtes and paſſions, which would have forced us to have ſought our happineſs in the miſery of another. For, after all, intereſt is always obeyed; hence the injuſtice of all our judgments, and the appellations of juſt and unjuſt are laviſhed on the ſame actions, according to the advantage reſulting from them to particulars.

If the phyſical univerſe be ſubject to the laws of motion, the moral univerſe is equally ſo to thoſe of intereſt. Intereſt is, on earth, the mighty magician, which to the eyes of every creature changes the appearance of all objects. The innocent

(b) The humane man is he to whom the ſight of another's misfortunes is inſupportable, and who to remove this afflicting ſpectacle, is, as it were, forced to relieve the wretched. The cruel man, on the contrary, is he, to whom the ſight of another's misfortunes gives a ſecret pleaſure; and it is to prolong that pleaſure, that he refuſes all relief to the wretched. Now theſe two perſons, ſo very oppoſite, both equally tend to their pleaſures, and are actuated by the ſame ſpring. But it will be ſaid, if a man does every thing for himſelf, no gratitude is due to benefactors? I anſwer, the benefactor, has at leaſt, no right to require any; for otherwiſe, inſtead of beſtowing a gift he has only made a contract. The Germans, ſays Tacitus, make and receive preſents, without any reciprocations of gratitude; it is in favour of the unfortunate, and to multiply the number of benefactors; and therefore the public, with very good reaſon, impoſes on the obliged the duty of gratitude.

ſheep, which feeds in our fields, is it not an object of dread and horror to thoſe imperceptible inſects which live upon the leaves of herbs? "Let us, ſay "they, haſten from hence: that voracious and cruel animal is coming, whoſe "enormous throat ſwallows at once both us and our cities. Why does not he act "like the lion and tyger? Thoſe benign animals do not deſtroy our habitations; "they do not feed on our blood; but, as juſt avengers of guilt, puniſh in "the ſheep the cruelties it inflicts on us." Thus different intereſts metamorphoſe objects: we conſider the lion as a cruel animal, whereas among the inſects, it is the ſheep; and what Leibnitz ſaid of the phyſical univerſe may be applied to the moral: That this world being conſtantly in motion, every inſtant offered a new and different phænomenon to each of its inhabitants.

This principle is ſo agreeable to experience, that, without entering into a farther diſcuſſion, I think myſelf warranted to conclude, that perſonal intereſt is the only and univerſal eſtimator of the merit of human actions; and, therefore, that Probity, with regard to an individual is, according to my definition, nothing more than the habitude of actions perſonally advantageous to this individual.

CHAP. III.

Of the Mind, or Underſtanding, with regard to an individual.

LET us now transfer to ideas the principles I have above applied to actions; and it muſt be acknowledged, that each individual gives the name of Underſtanding only to the habitude of thoſe ideas which are uſeful to him, either with regard to inſtruction or entertainment; and that, in this reſpect alſo, perſonal intereſt is ſtill the only judge of the merit of men.

Every idea offered to us, has always ſome regard to our ſtation, paſſions, or opinions. Now in all theſe ſeveral caſes we value an idea in proportion to its uſe. The pilot, the phyſician, and the engineer, will have more regard for a ſhipwright, a botaniſt, and mechanic, than a bookſeller, a goldſmith, and a maſon, will have for the ſame perſons; they always prefering to them the noveliſt, the deſigner, and the architect.

With regard to ideas proper for oppoſing or countenancing our paſſions, or our taſte, we ſhall doubtleſs account thoſe the moſt valuable, which moſt flatter thoſe paſſions or taſtes (a). A woman of an amorous complexion

(a) In order to deceive a woman, who was remarkable for a volubility of tongue, but otherwiſe did not want wit, a perſon was introduced to her as one that had a remarkable ſhare of it. The lady received him with the greateſt joy and civility; but, through eagerneſs of rendering herſelf agreeable to him, ſhe aſked him a hundred queſtions, without perceiving, that he returned no anſwer. At the concluſion of the viſit, ſhe was aſked how ſhe liked the perſon? He is a delightful man indeed, anſwered ſhe, his wit is ſo ready, and of ſo exquiſite a turn! This exclamation excited in the whole company, a burſt of laughter; for this charming companion, this remarkable wit, was dumb.

will place a greater value on a romance than on a metaphyſical treatiſe: a perſon of the character of Charles XII. will prefer the hiſtory of Alexander to every other work: and, certainly, the miſer will perceive underſtanding only in thoſe who ſhall inform him where to place his money at the higheſt intereſt.

In opinions, as in paſſions, to eſteem the ideas of others, it muſt be our intereſt to eſteem them; and here I cannot help obſerving, that, with reſpect to the latter, men may be moved by two kinds of intereſt. There are not wanting men, who are animated with a noble and judicious pride; who, friends to truth, attached to their opinions without obſtinacy, preſerve their minds in that ſtate of ſuſpenſion which leaves a free paſſage for new truths: of this number are ſome philoſophic minds, and ſome perſons who, too young to have eſtabliſhed opinions, do not bluſh to change them; theſe two claſſes of men, will always eſteem in others true and adequate ideas, and ſuch as are proper for gratifying their paſſion for truth, produced by a judicious pride.

There are others, and in this number I comprehend the far greateſt part, who are animated by a leſs noble vanity. Theſe can eſteem in others ſuch ideas only as are conformable to their own (b), and proper for juſtifying the high opinion they all entertain of the preciſion of their underſtanding. On this analogy of ideas is founded their hatred or their love. Hence that ſure and ready inſtinct in almoſt all common perſons, for knowing and avoiding perſons of merit (c); hence the ſtrong attraction between perſons of genius; that attraction, which, as it were, forces them to ſeek the acquaintance of each other, notwithſtanding the danger that often attends their intercourſe, from their common thirſt of glory; hence that ſure way of judging of a perſon's temper and underſtanding by his choice of books, and friends. The fool has only fools for his companions: every connection of friendſhip, when not founded on an intereſt of decency, love, protection, avarice, ambition, or ſome other ſimilar motive, always ſuppoſes between men ſome reſemblance of ideas, or ſentiments. It is this that brings together perſons of a very different condition (d). On this account it was that Auguſtus, Mæcenas, Scipio, Julian, Richelieu, and Conde, lived familiarly with men of genius; and hence the well known proverb, the truth of which is confirmed by its frequent uſe, "Shew me your company, I will ſhew you the man."

Thus the analogy or conformity of ideas is to be conſidered as the attractive and repulſive force, which ſeparates men, or draws them nearer to one

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(b) All, who are of a limited underſtanding, are continually depreciating, or decrying thoſe whoſe underſtanding is equally ſolid and comprehenſive. They accuſe them of too much refinement; and of thinking with regard to every particular, in too abſtracted a manner. "We will never, ſays "Mr. Hume, allow that a thing is juſt, "when it is beyond our weak comprehen- "ſion. The difference, adds that illuſtrious "philoſopher, between the common perſon "and the perſon of genius, is chiefly ſeen "in the more or leſs depth of the principles "on which they found their ideas. With "moſt men every judgment is particular; "they do not extend their views to the uni- "verſal propoſitions; to them every general "idea is obſcure."

(c) Fools, were it in their power, would gladly baniſh all men of genius, and, like the Epheſians, would be always crying out, If any one among us excels, let him go and excel elſewhere.

(d) At court the more wit a great man has, the more countenance he ſhews to the men of wit.

another.

another (e). Place in Conſtantinople, a philoſopher, who, being a ſtranger to the lights of revelation, could follow only thoſe of reaſon. Let this philoſopher deny Mahomet's miſſion, the viſions and pretended miracles of that prophet; who doubts but thoſe who are called true muſſelmans, would conceive an averſion to this philoſopher, look upon him with horror, call him madman, impious wretch, and ſometimes even a diſhoneſt man. It would be to little purpoſe for him to ſay, that in ſuch a religion it is abſurd for him to believe miracles of which he was not himſelf a witneſs; and as it is more probable that they are lies than miracles (f), to give too eaſy credit to them, is rather believing in impoſtors than God. It would be equally vain for him to repreſent, that had God been willing to confirm Mahomet's miſſion, he would never have made uſe of miracles that appear ridiculous to the eyes of a reaſon the leaſt reflective. Whatever arguments the philoſopher might uſe to ſupport his incredulity, he would never obtain, among thoſe good muſſelmans, the character of wiſe and honeſt, till he became ſo weak as to believe abſurdities, or ſo falſe as to pretend a belief of them. So true is it, that men judge of the opinions of others by the conformity of them with their own; and it is only by fooleries that fools are perſuaded.

If the ſavage of Canada prefers us to the other nations of Europe, it is becauſe we approach nearer to his manners, and way of living. It is to this complaiſance we owe the grand eulogium he thinks he makes of a Frenchman, in ſaying, "He is a man like me".

Thus it appears that in manners, opinions, and ideas, it is always ourſelves we eſteem in others; and this is the reaſon why the Cæſars, Alexanders, and in general, all great men, have conſtantly had other great men under them.

A prince of capacity, graſps the ſceptre, and is ſcarce ſeated on the throne than all the poſts are filled by ſuperior men. The prince did not form them ſuch, he ſeems even to have taken them at random; but forced to eſteem

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(e) There are very few men, who, had they the power, would not make uſe of tortures to cauſe their opinions to be adopted. Have not we, in our days, ſeen perſons of ſo little ſenſe, and ſuch an exceſſive pride, as to deſire that the civil power would puniſh a writer, becauſe he was of a different opinion from them, in prefering the Italian muſic to the French. If it is only in religious diſputes that men generally proceed to extremities, it is becauſe other diſputes do not afford the ſame pretences, nor the ſame means for being cruel. It is only to impotence that a perſon generally owes his moderation. The humane and moderate man is rarely to be found. On his meeting with a perſon of a different religion, he ſays, This man indeed entertains different opinions from me; but why ſhould I perſecute him? The goſpel has no where enjoined us to uſe tortures and priſons for making converts. True religion never built ſcaffolds; yet its miniſters have ſometimes been ſeen, in order to avenge their pride, offended by opinions different from theirs, to arm in their behalf the ſtupid credulity of people and princes. Few men have deſerved the panegyric of the Egyptian prieſts in Sethos, on queen Nephte. "So far from exciting animoſity, moleſtation, perſecution, though the ſuggeſtion of a miſtaken piety; ſhe, ſay theſe prieſts, has drawn from religion only maxims of lenity: ſhe never believed that it was lawful to torture men, in order to honour the Gods."

(f) Why, in ſuch a religion, ſhould not the witneſs of a miracle be ſuſpected? We are, ſays M. de Fontenelle, in order to relate a fact preciſely as we have ſeen it, that is, without addition or diminution, to keep ſo ſtrict a watch over ourſelves, that he who pretends he has never caught himſelf in a lie in this reſpect, may be concluded a liar.

and prefer perſons only of a genius ſimilar to his own, his choice muſt of neceſſity be good. On the other hand, a weak prince is, by the ſame reaſon, compelled to entertain ſuch as reſemble him; and thus he generally makes a bad choice. It is from a ſucceſſion of ſuch princes, that the higheſt employments have been, for ſeveral ages, filled by a ſucceſſion of weak men Accordingly the people, who cannot perſonally know their maſter, judge of him only from the talents of thoſe he employs, and is eſteemed for entertaining men of merit. Queen Chriſtina uſed to ſay, that, under a ſtupid monarch, the whole court is, or will become ſuch.

But it will be ſaid, men are ſometimes ſeen to admire in others, ideas which they never would have produced, and which have no ſimilarity with their own. The following ſaying of a cardinal, in generally known. On the nomination of a pope, he went up to him, and accoſted him in this manner: "You are now pope, and this is the laſt time you will hear truth; ſeduced by flattery, you will ſoon fancy yourſelf a great man; but remember, that before your exaltation you was both ignorant and obſtinate; farewel, I am now to adore you." Few courtiers have wit and reſolution to talk in ſuch a manner; moſt of them, like thoſe people who both worſhip and ſcourge their idol, tacitly rejoice at the fall of the maſter to whom they are ſubject. Their vindictive temper inſpires them to commend ſuch ſarcaſms; and revenge is an intereſt. Whoever is not animated by an intereſt of this kind, eſteems and feels only ſuch ideas as are analogous to his own; accordingly the wand for diſcovering a recent and unknown merit, is, and indeed can only be, in the hands of men of genius; for the lapidary alone is ſkilful in rough deamonds, and genius only perceives genius. It was the eye of a Turenne alone, that in young Churchill could diſcern the famous Marlborough.

Every idea too foreign to our manner of ſeeing and reflecting, will always appear ridiculous to us. The execution of a project, though vaſt and elevated, will appear eaſy to a great miniſter; while an ordinary miniſter will conſider it as ſenſeleſs and chimerical; and this project, according to a phraſe common among fools, will be refered to Plato's republic. This is the reaſon why, in certain countries, where the Minds are enervated with ſuperſtition, ſluggiſh, and little capable of noble enterprizes, the greateſt ridicule that can be thrown on a perſon, is to ſay of him, he endeavours to reform the ſtate. A ridicule which, from the indigence, the depopulation of theſe countries, and conſequently, the neceſſity of a reformation, in the eyes of foreigners, reflects on the authors of it. It is with ſuch people as with thoſe mean buffoons (g) who think they ſeverely expoſe a perſon, when they ſay, with a ſneering and malicious accent, He is a Roman; he is a wit. A kind of raillery, which, taken in its true ſenſe, ſignifies that this man is not like them; that is, he is neither a fool nor diſhoneſt. How

(g) The wealthy citizens add, in deriſion, that the wit is often ſeen at the rich man's door, but the rich man, never at the door of the wit; that is, anſwers the poet Saadi, Becauſe the man of wit knows the value of riches, and the rich man is ignorant of the value of knowledge. Beſides, how ſhould riches eſteem knowledge? The man of learning can ſet a value upon ignorance, having known it in his childhood; but the ignorant man cannot eſtimate learning, becauſe he never knew it.

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many of these weak acknowledgments and absurd phrases does an attentive mind hear in different companies; which, reduced to their precise meaning would sufficiently confound those who use them. The man of merit, therefore, should be indifferent with regard to the esteem or contempt of an individual, as each signifies nothing more than that he does not think or act like him. I might, by an infinity of other facts, farther prove, that we esteem only such ideas as are analogous to our own; but to ascertain this truth, it must be supported by proofs drawn from just reasoning.

CHAP. IV.

Of the necessity we are under of esteeming in others only ourselves.

TWO causes equally powerful determine to this action, vanity, and indolence. I say vanity, because the desire of esteem is common to all men; though some, to the pleasure of being admired, will add the merit of contemning admiration; but this contempt is not real, the person admired never thinking the admirer stupid: Now if all men are fond of esteem, every one, knowing, from experience, that his ideas will appear esteemable, or contemptible to others, only as they agree or clash with their own, the consequence is, that, swayed by vanity, every one cannot help esteeming in others a conformity of ideas, which assure him of their esteem; and to hate in them an opposition of ideas, as a certain indication of their hatred; or, at least, of their contempt, which is to be considered as a corrective of hatred. But even suppose a person should sacrifice his vanity to the love of truth, if this person be not animated with the keenest desire of information, I say, that his indolence will allow him to have, for those opinions opposite to his own, only an esteem upon trust. In order to explain what I mean by an esteem upon trust, I shall distinguish esteem into two kinds, one, which may be considered as the effect, either of deference to public opinion (a), or of confidence in the judgment of certain persons; and this I call esteem upon trust. Such is that of certain persons for very indifferent novels, meerly because they imagine them to come from the pens of our famous writers. Such is even the general admiration of Descartes and Newton; an admiration, which,

(a) M. de la Fontaine had only such an esteem for Plato's philosophy. M. de Fontinelle relates on this head, that la Fontaine one day said to him; "This Plato was certainly a great philosopher."— "Do you find any remarkable clearness of ideas in him?" answered Fontinelle. "Oh! no: he is impenetrably obscure."—"Do not you find that he contradicts himself."——"Indeed, replied Fontaine, he is nothing more than a sophist." Then at once forgetting the acknowledgments he had just made, "Plato, says he, places his characters so properly! Socrates was on the Pyream, when Alcibiades, with a garland of flowers round his head.—— What an admirable philosopher this Plato was!"

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in moſt men, is the more enthuſiaſtic, as it is founded on the leſs knowledge. Whether, after forming to ourſelves a vague idea of the merit of thoſe great geniuſes, their admirers, in this idea, reſpect the work of their own admiration; or whether in pretending to be judges of ſuch a man as Newton they think to ſhare in the elogiums they ſo profuſely beſtow on him. This kind of eſteem, which our ignorance often obliges us to uſe, is, from that very circumſtance, the moſt general. Nothing is ſo uncommon as to judge according to our own ſentiments.

The other kind of eſteem is that which, independently of the opinions of others, is produced ſolely by the impreſſion made on us by certain ideas; and therefore I call it Felt-eſteem, being the only real eſteem, and that which is here meant. Now, in order to prove, that indolence allows us to grant this kind of eſteem only to ideas analogous to our own, it will be ſufficient to obſerve that, as geometry ſenſibly proves, by the analogy and ſecret relations which ideas already known have with unknown ideas, we obtain a knowledge of the latter; and that by following the progreſſion of theſe analogies, we may attain the utmoſt perfection of a ſcience; it follows, that ideas of no analogy with our own, would be to us unintellegible ideas. But it will be ſaid, there are no ideas which have not neceſſarily ſome relation, as they would otherwiſe be univerſally unknown. Yes; but this relation may be either immediate or remote: when immediate, the faint deſire every one has of information, renders him capable of the attention which the intelligence of ſuch ideas ſuppoſes; but when remote, as it generally is in thoſe opinions which are the reſult of a great number of ideas and various ſentiments, it is evident, that without being animated by a very keen deſire for information, and alſo a ſituation proper for gratifying that deſire, indolence will never allow us to conceive, nor conſequently to acquire, any Felt-eſteem contrary to our own.

Few have leiſure ſufficient for information. The poor man, for inſtance, can neither reflect nor examine; he receives truth or error only by prejudice: employed in daily labour, he cannot riſe to a certain ſphere of ideas. Accordingly he prefers the blue library*, to the writings of St. Real, Rochefoucault, and cardinal de Retz. Alſo, on thoſe days of public rejoicings, when there is free admittance to the playhouſes, the actors, ſenſible what audience they have to entertain, will rather act Don Japhet and Pourceaugnac, than Heraclius and the Miſantrope. What I ſay of the populace, may be applied to all the claſſes of mankind. The men of the world are diſtracted by a thouſand affairs and pleaſures. With their taſte, philoſophical works have as little analogy, as the Miſantrope with that of the populace. Accordingly, they will, in general, prefer a romance to Locke. It is from the ſame principle of analogies, that we explain why the learned, and even men of wit have prefered authors leſs eſteemed, to thoſe of a ſuperior reputation. Why did Malherbe prefer Statius to every other poet? Why did Heinſius (b) and Corneille

* Small books ſtitched in blue paper.

(b) Lucan, ſaid Heinſius, in compariſon of the other poets, is what a fiery horſe, proudly neighing, is to a drove of aſſes, whoſe ignoble voice betrays their ſervile diſpoſition.

value Lucan beyond Virgil? How came Adrian to prefer the eloquence of Cato to that of Cicero? For what reaſon did Scaliger (c) conſider Homer and Horace as far beneath Virgil and Juvenal? Becauſe, the eſteem we have for an author, is proportional to the analogy between his ideas and thoſe of his reader.

Let a manuſcript work be put into the hands of ſeven men of genius, equally free from prepoſſeſſions or prejudice, and let them be ſeparately deſired to mark the moſt ſtriking paſſages: each of them will underline different places; and if, afterwards, the approved paſſages be compared with the genius and temper of the approver, each will be found to have praiſed only the ideas analogous to his manner of ſeeing and perceiving; and that underſtanding is, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, a ſtring that vibrates only with the uniſon.

If the Abbe de Longuerue, as he himſelf uſed to ſay, of all the works of St. Auguſtine, remembered only, that the Trojan horſe was a military machine; and, in the romance of Cleopatra, a famous counſellor could ſee nothing intereſting, except the diſſolution of the marriage of Eliza with Artabanes; it muſt be acknowledged, that the only difference in this reſpect, between the learned, or men of wit, and the common, is, that the former having a greater number of ideas, their ſphere of analogies is much more extenſive. If the queſtion relates to ſpecies of wit, very different from what he is maſter of, the man of genius, who is in all reſpects like other men, eſteems only thoſe ideas that are analogous to his own. Let a Newton, a Quinaut, a Machiavel, be brought together; let them not be named; let no opportunity be given them for conceiving for each other, that kind of eſteem which I call eſteem on truſt; it will be found that after having reciprocally, but to no purpoſe, endeavoured to communicate their ideas to one another, Newton will look upon Quinaut as an inſupportable paultry rhimer; Newton will ſeem to him a maker of Almanacks; and both will conſider Machiavel as a coffee-houſe politician; and, in fine, all three, by calling each other men of very little genius, will revenge, by a reciprocal contempt, the mutual uneaſineſs they gave each other.

Now, if ſuperior men, entirely abſorbed in their reſpective kinds of ſtudy, are not ſuſceptible of a Felt-eſteem, for a ſpecies of genius too different from their own, every author who abounds with new ideas, can only expect eſteem from two ſorts of men: either young perſons, who by not previouſly adopting any opinion, have ſtill the deſire and leiſure of informing themſelves; or of thoſe whoſe minds, being deſirous of truth, and analogous to that of the author, had previouſly ſome glimpſe of the exiſtence of theſe ideas. But the number of ſuch men has always been very ſmall. This retards the progreſs of the human mind: and hence the extreme ſlowneſs with which every truth becomes diſplayed to the eyes of all the world.

From what has been ſaid it follows, that moſt men, ſubmitting to indolence, conceive thoſe ideas only which are analogous to their own.

(c) Scaliger quotes the ſeventeenth ode of the fourth book of Horace as execrable; and Heinſius quotes it, as one of the maſter-pieces of antiquity.

It appears, from what has been juſt ſaid, that moſt men, ſubject to indolence, form a perfect conception only of thoſe ideas that are analogous to their own; that they have only a Felt-eſteem for no other than this kind of ideas: and hence proceeds that high opinion which every one is in a manner forced to have of himſelf; an opinion which the moraliſts would not perhaps have attributed to pride, had they been more thoroughly acquainted with the principles juſt laid down. They would then have been ſenſible, that the ſacred reſpect and the profound admiration, which when alone, they often feel for themſelves, can be nothing more than the effect of the neceſſity we were under of having an higher eſteem of ourſelves than for others.

How can we forbear having the higheſt ideas of ourſelves? Every man changes his opinions, as ſoon as he believes that thoſe opinions are falſe. Every one therefore believes, that he thinks juſtly, and conſequently, much better than thoſe whoſe ideas are contrary to his own. Now, if there are not two men who think exactly alike, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that each in particular believes, that his ſentiments are more juſt than thoſe entertained by all the reſt of mankind (d). The ducheſs de la Ferte ſaid, one day to madam de Stahl, I muſt confeſs, my dear friend, that I find no body always in the right but myſelf (e). Let us hear the Talopoins, the Bonzes, the Bramins, the Guebres, the Imans, and the Marabouts, when they preach againſt each other in the aſſembly of the multitude, does not each of them ſay, like the ducheſs de la Ferte? Ye people, I aſſure you, that I alone am always in the right. Each then believes that he has a ſuperior underſtanding, and the fools are not the perſons who are the leaſt ſenſible of it (f). This gave room for the fable of the four merchants, who went to the fair to ſell beauty, birth, dignity, and wit; all of whom diſpoſed of their merchandize, except the laſt, who returned without even taking handſel.

But, ſay they, we find ſome men acknowledge that others have greater mental abilities than themſelves. Yes, I reply, we do find people who confeſs it; and this confeſſion ſprings from a delicacy of ſoul: in the mean time, they have only an eſteem upon truſt, for thoſe whom they acknowledge their

(d) Experience informs us, that every one places in the rank of dunces and of bad books, every man and every work that contradicts his opinions; that he would impoſe ſilence on the man, and ſuppreſs the work. Thus the orthodox who are deficient in underſtanding, have ſometimes given hereticks an advantage over them. If in a trial at the bar, ſay theſe laſt, one party ſhould forbid the other to exhibit his proofs in ſupport of his right; would not this act of violence in one of the parties be conſidered as a proof of the injuſtice of his cauſe?

(e) See the entertaining Memoirs of madam de Stahl, which has been lately tranſlated into Engliſh.

(f) What preſumption, ſay the perſons of mean abilities, is there in thoſe called men of genius? How ſuperior do they think themſelves to the reſt of mankind? But the others reply, the ſtag who boaſted of being the ſwifteſt of all ſtags, muſt doubtleſs be puffed up with pride; but without wounding his modeſty, he may ſafely ſay, that he runs better than a tortoiſe. You are the tortoiſe; you have neither read nor ſpent your hours in meditation: how then can you have a mind cultivated like his, who has taken great pains in acquiring knowledge? You accuſe him with preſumption; and you, without ſtudy and reflection, would be upon an equal footing with him. Which then of the two is the more preſumptuous?

ſuperior; they only join in the public opinion, in giving them this preference, and confeſs that theſe perſons are eſteemed, without being inwardly convinced, that they are more worthy of eſteem than themſelves (g).

A man will confeſs, without difficulty, that in geometry he is much inferior to Fontaine, d'Alembert, Clairaut, and Euler; that in poetry he is excelled by Moliere, Racine, and Voltaire; but I ſay, that this man will ſet ſo much the leſs value on that perfection in proportion as he acknowledges he has ſuperiors in it; and that beſides, he will think himſelf ſo greatly recompenſed for the ſuperiority the perſons above-mentioned have over him, either by finding that thoſe ſciences are of no conſequence, or by the variety of his knowledge, his good ſenſe, his acquaintance with the world, or by ſome other of the like advantages; that, every thing properly conſidered, he will think himſelf as worthy of eſteem as any other perſon whatever (h).

But how, ſay they, can it be imagined, that a man, who, for example, executes the ſubordinate offices of the magiſtrate, can believe that he has a genius equal to Corneille? 'Tis true, I reply, that here he will make no body his confidant: however, when by a ſcrupulous examination, we have diſcovered how much we are daily affected by ſentiments of pride, without our perceiving it, and what elogiums are neceſſary to embolden us ſo far as to make us confeſs to ourſelves and to others the profound eſteem we have for our own abilities, we ſhall perceive that the ſilence of pride is no proof of its abſence. Let us ſuppoſe, to follow the above example, that three counſellors leaving the play-houſe, accidentally meet, and begin to talk of Corneille, all three perhaps cry out at once, that Corneille was the greateſt genius in the world: however, if, to diſburden himſelf of this intolerable weight of eſteem, one of them adds, that Corneille was indeed a great man, but he excelled in what is of a very frivolous nature; it is certain, if we may judge from the contempt which certain people affect to entertain for poetry, the two other counſellors will be of the ſame opinion with the firſt: then from confidence to confidence they come to compare the quibbles of law with poetry: the art of pleading, ſays another, has its plots, its delicacies, and its combinations, like all other arts. Really, replies the third, there is no art more difficult. Now, from an hypotheſis very eaſily admitted, that in this difficult art, each of theſe coun-

(g) Fontenelle would readily have agreed that Corneille had a ſuperior genius in poetry to him; but he would not have been ſenſible of it. Suppoſe, in order to be convinced of this truth, that Fontenelle had been deſired to give the ideas he had entertained of the perfection of poetry: it is certain that he would here have propoſed no other excellent rules than ſuch as he himſelf had obſerved as well as Corneille; he muſt therefore have ſecretly entertained the belief that he himſelf was as great a poet as any other whatever; and that, in confeſſing himſelf inferior to Corneille, he conſequently did no more than ſacrifice his opinion to that of the public. Few men have the courage to confeſs, that they have what I call a greater Felt-eſteem for themſelves, than for any body elſe; but whether they deny or confeſs it, it does not alter the exiſtence of this ſentiment in their minds.

(h) We praiſe ourſelves for every thing we poſſeſs: ſome boaſt of their ſtupidity, under the name of good ſenſe; others praiſe their beauty; ſome puffed up with their riches, place theſe gifts of fortune to the account of judgment and prudence; the woman who ſpends the evening with her cook, thinks herſelf as worthy of eſteem as a perſon of learning. One who prints a work in folio, deſpiſes the writer of a romance, and fancies himſelf as ſuperior to the latter, as a folio is bigger than a pamphlet.

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ſellors thinks himſelf the moſt able of the three, the reſult of this conference will be, that each of them fancies he has as great a genius as Corneille. We are, through vanity, and above all, through ignorance, ſo neceſſitated to eſteem ourſelves preferably to others, that the greateſt man in every art, is he whom each artiſt places in the firſt rank after himſelf. In the time of Themiſtocles, when pride was only different from the pride of the preſent age, in its being more undiſguiſed, all the captains, after the battle of Salamis, were obliged, by notes laid upon the altar of Neptune, to declare who had the greateſt ſhare in obtaining the victory; each gave that honour to himſelf, and adjudged the ſecond place to Themiſtocles: upon which the diſcerning people gave the greateſt reward to him, whom each captain had conſidered as the moſt worthy except himſelf.

It is then certain, that every perſon has neceſſarily the higheſt idea of himſelf; and that he conſequently never eſteems in another any thing but his own image and reſemblance.

The general concluſion of what I have ſaid on the capacity of the mind, conſidered in relation to the individual, is, that it is only the aſſemblage of intereſting ideas to that individual, whether as agreeable or inſtructive: whence it follows, that perſonal intereſt, as I had propoſed to ſhew, is in this reſpect the only judge of the merit of mankind.

CHAP. V.

Of Probity in relation to private ſocieties.

UNDER this point of view, I ſay, that probity is only a more or leſs diſtinguiſhed habit of performing actions particularly uſeful to this little ſociety. Certain virtuous ſocieties indeed frequently appear to lay aſide their own intereſt to judge the actions of men, in conformity to the intereſt of the public; but in this they only gtatify the paſſion which an enlightened pride gives them for virtue; and conſequently, like all other ſocieties, obey the law of perſonal intereſt. What other motive can determine men to generous actions? It is as impoſſible to love virtue for the ſake of virtue as to love vice for the ſake of vice (a).

(a) The continual declamations of moraliſts againſt the malignity of mankind, are a proof of their knowing but little of human nature. Men are not cruel and perfidious, but carried away by their own intereſt. The declamations of the moraliſts will certainly make no change in this moral ſpring of the univerſe. They ought not therefore to complain of the wickedneſs of mankind, but of the ignorance of the legiſlators, who have always placed private intereſt in oppoſition to the general intereſt. If the Scythians were more virtuous than we, it is becauſe their legiſlators, and their manner of life, inſpired more probity.

Brutus

Brutus ſacrificed his ſon to the ſafety of Rome, only becauſe the paternal love he felt for him was leſs powerful than his love for his country: in this inſtance he only yielded to the ſtronger paſſion; a paſſion which animating him for the public intereſt, made him perceive, in a ſeverity to his own child, ſo generous, ſo proper to revive the love of liberty, the only reſource that could ſave Rome, and prevent her falling again under the tyranny of the Tarquins. In the critical circumſtances in which Rome was then placed, ſuch an action was neceſſary to ſerve as a foundation to the vaſt power to which afterwards the love of liberty and the public welfare aroſe.

But as there are few Brutus's, and fewer ſocieties compoſed of ſuch men, I ſhall take my examples from the common order, to prove that in each ſociety private intereſt is the only diſtributer of the eſteem beſtowed on account of human actions.

To be convinced of this, let us caſt our eyes upon a man who ſacrifices all his fortune to ſave a relation, who is an aſſaſſin, from undergoing the ſeverity of the law. This man will certainly be conſidered by his family as extremely virtuous, though he is really extremely unjuſt. I ſay extremely unjuſt; becauſe, if the hope of impunity multiplies crimes, and the certainty of puniſhment is abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve order in any nation; it is evident, that a pardon granted to a criminal, is injuſtice to the public, of which he renders himſelf an accomplice, who ſolicits for ſuch a pardon (b).

When a miniſter, deaf to the ſolicitations of his relations and friends, believes that he ought to raiſe none to the higheſt poſts in the ſtate, but men of the greateſt merit; ſo juſt a miniſter will certainly paſs in ſociety for a man uſeleſs, void of friendſhip, and perhaps even void of honeſty. It may be ſaid, to the diſgrace of the preſent age, that it is almoſt always to injuſtice, that a man in a high poſt, owes the titles of a good friend, of a good relation, of a virtuous and beneficent man, laviſhly beſtowed upon him by the ſociety in which he lives.

When a father, by his intrigues, obtains the poſt of general for a ſon incapable of commanding, that father ſhall be mentioned by his family, as a worthy and beneficent man: yet what can be more abominable, than to expoſe a nation, or at leaſt ſeveral provinces, to the ravages which follow a defeat, only to gratify the ambition of a family?

(b) I have been guilty, ſaid Chilo, when dying, but of one crime, that of having, during my magiſtracy, ſaved from the rigour of the laws a criminal, my beſt friend.

I ſhall alſo cite on this ſubject a fact related in Guliſtan. An Arab going to complain to the Sultan of the violences committed by two unknown perſons in his houſe: the ſultan went thither; cauſed the lights to be put out; ſeized the criminals; had their heads wrapped up in a cloak, and ordered that they ſhould be ſtabbed. The execution being thus performed, he ordered the flambeaux brought with him to be again lighted; and having examined the bodies of the criminals, lift up his hands, and returned thanks to God. What favour, ſaid the viſier, have you then received from heaven? —— Viſier, replied the ſultan, I thought my ſon had been the author of theſe crimes; therefore, I ordered the lights to be put out, and the faces of theſe unhappy wretches to be covered with a cloak. I was afraid leſt paternal tenderneſs ſhould make me fail in the juſtice which I owe my ſubjects. Judge whether I ought not to thank heaven, when I find myſelf juſt, without having taken away the life of my ſon!

What can be more worthy of puniſhment than the ſolicitations, againſt which it is impoſſible for a ſovereign to be always on his guard? Such ſolicitations, that have but too often plunged nations in the greateſt misfortunes, are the inexhauſtible ſources of calamities: calamities from which, perhaps, the people can be no otherwiſe delivered, than by breaking the bonds of affinity that unite mankind, and declaring every citizen a child of the ſtate. This is the only means of ſtifling the vices authoriſed by an appearance of virtue, of hindering the ſubdiviſion of a people into an infinite number of families or little ſocieties, whoſe intereſts are almoſt always oppoſite to that of the public, and at length extinguiſh in the mind all kind of love for our country.

What I have ſaid ſufficiently proves, that before the tribunal of a ſmall ſociety, intereſt is the only judge of the merit of men's actions: I ſhould, therefore, have added nothing to what I have ſaid, had I not propoſed the public utility as the principal end of this work. Now I am ſenſible that an honeſt man, apprehenſive of the aſcendency the opinion of the ſociety in which he lives may have over him, may juſtly be afraid of being frequently turned from the path of virtue.

I ſhall not, therefore, quit this ſubject, without pointing out the means of eſcaping the ſeductions, and avoiding the ſnares that private ſocieties lay for the probity of honeſt men, and into which they are but too often ſurpriſed.

CHAP. VI.

Of the means of ſecuring Virtue.

A Man is juſt, when all his actions tend to the public welfare. Doing well is not all that is requiſite to merit the title of virtuous. A prince has a thouſand places to beſtow; he muſt fill them up; and he cannot avoid rendering a thouſand people happy. Here then, his virtue depends only on the juſtice and injuſtice of his choice (a). If, when a place of importance is vacant, he gives it from friendſhip, from weakneſs, from ſolicitation, or from indolence, to a man of moderate abilities, in preference to another of ſuperior talents, he ought to be conſidered as unjuſt, whatever praiſes others may beſtow on his probity.

In the affair of probity, he ought only to conſult and liſten to the public intereſt, and not to the men by whom he is ſurrounded; for perſonal intereſt too often leads him into an illuſion.

In courts, this intereſt gives to falſhood the name of prudence, and that of ſtupidity to truth, which is there conſidered at leaſt as a folly, and muſt ever be conſidered as ſuch.

(a) In certain countries, the placemen are covered with the ſkin of an aſs, to let them know, that they are not indebted for it to what is called decency or favour; but only to juſtice.

It is there dangerous; and offenſive virtues will always be conſidered in the rank of faults. Truth meets with favour, only from humane and good princes, ſuch as Lewis XII. and Lewis XV. The players having repreſented the firſt on the ſtage, his courtiers perſuaded him to puniſh them: No, ſaid he, they do me juſtice; they believe me worthy of hearing the truth. An example of moderation, ſince imitated by the duke d'------. The above prince being forced to lay ſome impoſitions on a province, was wearied out by the remonſtrances of a deputy from the ſtates of that province and at length, replied with vivacity, And what are your forces, that you would bring to oppoſe my will? What can you do? ------ Obey and hate, replied the deputy. A noble anſwer, that did equal honour to the deputy and the prince. It was almoſt as difficult for the one to hear, as for the other to make it. The ſame prince had a miſtreſs, who was carried off by a gentleman. He was exaſperated, and his favourites incited him to revenge. Puniſh, ſaid they, an inſolent ------- I know, he replied, that it is eaſy for me to revenge it; a word would be ſufficient to rid me of a rival, and that is the very reaſon that hinders my pronouncing it.

Such moderation is very rare; truth commonly meets with too bad a reception from princes and the great, to ſtay long in courts. How can ſhe dwell in a country where moſt of thoſe who are ſtiled men of probity, habituated to baſeneſs and flattery, give, and really ought to give, to thoſe vices the name of the cuſtoms of the world? It is difficult to perceive that to be criminal which they find to be uſeful. Who doubts, however, that there is not a kind of flattery more dangerous, and conſequently more criminal, in the eyes of a prince animated with a love of true glory, than the libels wrote againſt him? Not that I here vindicate libels; but flattery may lead a Prince from the way of virtue, while a libel may ſometimes bring a tyrant into it. It is not often, that by the freedom of ſpeech, the complaints of the oppreſſed can reach the throne (b). But intereſt will always hide ſuch truths from the private connections of the court: and perhaps there is no other method of defending ourſelves from the ſeducing illuſions that prevail there, than by keeping at a diſtance from thoſe connections. It is at leaſt certain, that there can be no method of preſerving there a virtue conſtantly firm and uncorrupt, without having habitually preſent to the mind, a principle of public utility (c); without being thoroughly acquainted with the true intereſt of the public, and conſequently without moral and political knowledge. Perfect probity never

(b) "It is not, ſays the poet Saadi, the "timid voice of miniſters that ought to bring "to the ears of kings the lamentations of "the miſerable; the cries of the people "ſhould pierce directly to the throne."

(c) In conſequence of this principle, Fontenelle has defined a lie, the concealing a truth ought to divulge. A man, leaving a woman's bed, meets her huſband, who cries, Where have you been? What ſhall he anſwer? Shall he tell the truth? No, ſays Fontenelle, becauſe the truth would then be of no uſe to any one. Now, Truth herſelf is ſubject to the public utility. She ſhould preſide in the compoſition of hiſtory, and in the ſtudy of arts and ſciences: She ought to be preſent with the great, and even to ſnatch from them the veil that hides the faults prejudicial to the public; but ſhe ought never to reveal thoſe that injure none but the man himſelf. It is afflicting him to no purpoſe; under the pretence of ſpeaking truth, it is being cruel and brutal; inſtead of ſhewing a love of truth, it is glorying in another's humiliation.

falls

falls to the lot of the ſtupid: for probity without knowledge, is only probity of intention, for which the public neither have nor can have any real regard; both becauſe they cannot judge of the intention, and becauſe in the judgment they form, they conſult nothing but their own intereſt.

If he is ſaved from death who has the misfortune to kill his friend in the chace, this favour is not merely ſhewn to the innocence of his intentions, ſince the law capitally condemns the ſentinel who involuntarily ſuffers himſelf to be ſurpriſed by ſleep. The public, in the firſt caſe, only pardons, that the loſs of one citizen may not be added to the loſs of another; in the ſecond he is puniſhed in order to prevent their being ſurpriſed, and the misfortunes to which they might be expoſed by ſuch want of vigilance.

We ought then, in order to be virtuous, to blend the light of knowledge with greatneſs of ſoul. Whoever aſſembles within himſelf theſe different gifts of nature always directs his courſe by the compaſs of the public utility. This utility is the principle on which all human virtues are founded, and the baſis of all legiſlations. It ought to inſpire the legiſlator with the reſolution to force the people to ſubmit to his laws; to this principle, in ſhort, he ought to ſacrifice all his ſentiments, and even thoſe of humanity itſelf.

Public humanity is ſometimes void of pity for individuals (d). When a veſſel is ſurprized by long calms, and famine has, with an imperious voice, commanded the mariners to draw lots for the unfortunate victim who is to ſerve as a repaſt to his companions, they kill him without remorſe: this veſſel is the emblem of a nation; every thing becomes lawful, and even virtuous, that procures the public ſafety.

The concluſion of what I have juſt ſaid is, that in the caſe of probity, counſel is not to be taken from private connections, but only from the intereſt of the public: he who conſtantly conſults it will have all his actions directed either immediately to the public utility, or to the advantage of individuals, without their being detrimental to the ſtate.

The perſon who ſuccours merit in diſtreſs gives undoubtedly an example of beneficence conformable to the general intereſt: he pays the tax which probity impoſes on riches.

Honeſt poverty has no other patrimony than the treaſures of virtuous opulence.

Whoever conducts himſelf by this principle may give to his own mind an advantageous teſtimony of his probity, and prove that he really merits the title of a worthy man. I ſay merits: for to obtain a ſingular reputation of this kind, it is not enough to be virtuous; it is neceſſary he ſhould, like Codrus and Regulus, be happily placed in times, in circumſtances, and in a ſtation, that will allow his actions to have a ſufficient influence on the welfare of the

(d) This principle was among the Arabians conſecrated by the example of ſeverity given by the famous Ziad, governor of Baſra. After having in vain endeavoured to purge that city from the aſſaſſins who infeſted it, he ſaw himſelf obliged to inflict the pains of death on every man who was found in the ſtreets at night. They ſtopped a ſtranger; he is conducted to the governor's tribunal; he endeavours to move him by his tears. Unhappy ſtranger, ſays Ziad, I muſt appear to thee unjuſt, in puniſhing a breach of orders that thou were ignorant of; but the ſafety of Baſra depends on thy death: I lament and condemn thee.

public. In any other ſituation the probity of a citizen unknown to the public is, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, only a virtuous accompliſhment in private ſociety, of ſingular benefit to thoſe with whom he is connected.

A private men can only by his abilities render himſelf uſeful and praiſeworthy to a nation. Of what ſervice is the probity of an individual to the public? It is comparatively of little uſe (e). Thus the living are judged as poſterity judges the dead: they do not enquire in what degree Juvenal was wicked, Ovid debauched, Hannibal cruel, Lucretia impious; how far Horace was a libertine, Auguſtus guilty of diſſimulation, and Cæſar the huſband of every wife, and the wife of every huſband: poſterity is only employed in forming a judgment of their reſpective talents.

Upon which I ſhall remark, that moſt of thoſe who warmly exclaim againſt the domeſtic vices of illuſtrious men do not give ſo great a proof of their love for the public welfare, as of their envying their abilities: this, in their eyes, frequently wears the maſque of a virtue; but is commonly no more than a diſguiſed envy, ſince in general they have not the ſame horror for the vices of a man deſtitute of merit. Without making an apology for vices, we may ſafely ſay, that worthy men would have cauſe to bluſh at the ſentiments on which they pride themſelves, did they diſcover the baſeneſs of the principles upon which they are founded.

Perhaps the public ſhew too great an indifference for virtue; perhaps our authors are ſometimes more careful in the correction of their works, than in that of their manners; and follow the example of Averroes, a philoſopher, who, it is ſaid, allowed himſelf to commit knaviſh actions, which he regarded not only as hardly injurious, but even of uſe to his reputation. By this means, ſay they, he put his rivals on a different ſcent, and turned thoſe criticiſms on his manners that would have been employed againſt his works, and doubtleſs have given a more dangerous ſhock to his glory.

I have in this chapter pointed out the means of eſcaping the ſeductions of private connections; of preſerving our virtue unſhaken amidſt the ſhock of a thouſand private and different intereſts, by having a regard, in all our ſteps, to the intereſt of the public.

CHAP. VII.

Of the underſtanding in relation to particular ſocieties.

WHAT I have here ſaid of underſtandng in relation to a ſingle man, I ſhall here ſay of it, with reſpect to particular ſocieties; but not repeat on this ſubject a tedious enumeration of the ſame proofs: I ſhall only ſhew, by new applications of the ſame principle, that every ſociety, like

(e) It is allowable to praiſe his heart, but not his mind; becauſe the firſt is of no great conſequence, and envy fancies that ſuch an elogium will obtain but a ſmall degree of admiration from the public.

every individual, looks with eſteem or contempt on the ideas of other ſocieties only according to their agreement, or diſagreement with the ideas, paſſions, genius, and ſtation, in life of the perſons who compoſe that ſociety.

Suppoſe a Fakir was to appear in a circle of Sybarites, would he not be regarded with that contemptuous pity, which ſenſual and ſoft minds feel for a man who loſes real pleaſures to purſue an imaginary good? Should a conqueror enter the retreat of the philoſophers, who can doubt but that he would treat their moſt profound ſpeculations as things in themſelves the moſt vain and frivolous; that he would conſider theſe men with that contemptuous diſdain which a mind, filled with its own greatneſs, has for thoſe whom it little eſteems; and with that ſuperiority with which power looks down upon weakneſs. But if I tranſport this conqueror to the portico; Proud mortal, ſays the offended Stoic, who deſpiſeſt ſouls more lofty than thine own, learn that the object of thy deſires is that of our contempt; and that nothing appears great on earth, when contemplated by an elevated mind. In an antient foreſt ſits a traveller at the foot of the cedar, which to him ſeems to touch the heavens; above the clouds where the eagle ſoars, the lofty trees creep above the ground like the humble broom, and preſent to the eye of the king of birds only a verdant carpet ſpread over the plains. Thus the Stoic filled with pride is revenged for the diſdain ſhewn by the ambitious; and thus in general, all treat each other who are animated by different paſſions.

Let a woman young, beautiful, and full of gallantry, ſuch as hiſtory has painted the celebrated Cleopatra, who, by the multiplicity of her charms, the attractions of her wit, the variety of her careſſes, makes her lover daily taſte all the delights that could be found in inconſtancy, and in ſhort, whoſe firſt enjoyment was, as Echard ſays, only the firſt favour; let ſuch a woman appear in an aſſembly of prudes, whoſe age and deformity ſecured their chaſtity, they would there deſpiſe her charms and her talents; ſheltered from ſeduction by the Meduſean ſhield of deformity, theſe prudes form no conception of the pleaſure ariſing from the infatuation of a lover; and do not perceive the difficulty a beautiful woman finds in reſiſting the deſire of making him the confidant of all her ſecret charms: they therefore fall with fury upon this lovely woman, and place her weakneſs among crimes of the blackeſt die; but let one of theſe prudes, in her turn, appear in a circle of coquets, ſhe will there be treated with as little reſpect as youth and beauty ſhew to old age and deformity. To be revenged on her prudery, they will tell her, that the fair who yields to love, and the diſagreeable who reſiſt that paſſion, are both prompted by vanity; that, in caſe of a lover, one ſeeks an admirer of her charms, and the other flies on him who proclaims her diſgrace; and that both being animated by the ſame motive, there is no other difference but that of beauty between the prude and the woman of gallantry.

Thus the different paſſions reciprocally inſult over each other; the oſtentatious man, who will not know merit in a mean ſituation, and would ſee it creep at his feet, is in his turn deſpiſed by men of ſenſe and learning. Fooliſh mortal, cry they, on what doſt thou pride thyſelf? Doſt thou glory in the honours that are paid thee? This homage is not paid to thy merit, but to thy ſplendor and thy power. Thou art nothing of thyſelf; if thou ſhineſt, the luſtre is reflected on thee by the favour of thy ſovereign. Behold the vapours that ariſe

from the mud of thoſe marſhes; ſuſtained in the air, they are changed into gaudy clouds; they ſhine like thee, with a ſplendor borrowed from the ſun; but that ſtar ſets, and the glowing brightneſs of the cloud diſappears.

As contrary paſſions excite a reciprocal contempt in thoſe who are animated by them, ſo too much oppoſition in the mind produces nearly the ſame effect.

Being neceſſitated (as I have already proved in chapter iv.) to reliſh no ideas but thoſe that are analogous to our own, how is it poſſible for us to admire a turn of mind very different from ours? As the ſtudy of a ſcience or an art makes us perceive an infinite number of beauties and difficulties in it, of which we could have formed no conception without our having engaged in ſuch ſtudy, we have therefore neceſſarily more of what I call Felt-eſteem for that ſcience or art which we thus cultivate.

Our eſteem for the other arts and ſciences is always more or leſs proportionable to their connection with the other arts to which we apply ourſelves. For this reaſon the geometrician has commonly a greater eſteem for the philoſopher than for the poet; and the latter has an higher opinion of the orator than of the geometrician.

Thus with the beſt intentions, illuſtrious men of different taſtes ſet very little value on each other. To be convinced of the reality of the contempt, which on their part is always reciprocal, (for there is no debt more faithfully paid than contempt) let us liſten to the diſcourſes of men of genius.

Like ſeveral empirics diſperſed in a market-place, each calls admirers to himſelf, and thinks, that he alone can deſerve them. The writer of romances is perſuaded, that his work ſuppoſes the moſt invention and delicacy of mind; the metaphyſician fancies that he is the ſource of evidence, and the confidant of nature. I alone, ſays he, can generalize ideas, and diſcover the ſeeds of the events that daily unfold themſelves in the phyſical and moral world, and by me alone man is enlightened. The poet, who conſiders the metaphyſicians as grave formal fools aſſures them, that if they would ſearch for Truth in the well in which ſhe has hid herſelf, they need have nothing to draw her from thence but the ſieve of the Danaides; that the diſcoveries of their art are doubtful, but that the charms of his are certain.

By ſuch diſcourſes theſe three men reciprocally prove the little eſteem they have for each other; and if in ſuch a diſpute they take a politician for their arbitrator, he will ſay, you muſt know that the arts and ſciences are only ſerious trifles, and frivolous difficulties. We may apply ourſelves to them in our infancy, in order to exerciſe the mind; but it is only the knowledge of the people's intereſt that ought to fill the heads of perſons of ſenſe arrived at the years of diſcretion. Every other object is little, and whatever is little is deſpicable: whence he concludes, that he alone is worthy of univerſal admiration.

Now to cloſe this article with another example, let us ſuppoſe a natural philoſopher has liſtened to this concluſion. He will immediately reply to the politician, You deceive yourſelf. If we meaſure greatneſs of mind by the greatneſs of the objects about which we are converſant, it is I alone who am really worthy of eſteem. A ſingle diſcovery of mine changes the intereſt of nations. I rub a needle upon the load-ſtone, and incloſe it within the compaſs; upon which America is diſcovered; they dig mines: a thouſand veſſels loaded

loaded with gold divide the waves of the ſea, empty their treaſures in Europe; and the face of the political world is changed. Always employed on grand objects, if I retire to ſilence and ſolitude, it is not to ſtudy the little revolutions of governments, but thoſe of the univerſe; it is not to penetrate into the trifling ſecrets of courts, but into thoſe of nature: I diſcover how the ſea has formed mountains, and how it has encroached upon the earth; I meaſure both the force which moves the ſtars, and the extent of the luminous circles they deſcribe in the azure vault of heaven; I calculate their magnitude, compare it with that of the earth, and bluſh at the ſmallneſs of this globe. As I am ſo aſhamed of the hive, judge of the contempt I muſt feel for the inſects who inhabit it: the greateſt legiſlator is no more in my eye than the king of bees.

Thus we ſee by what method of reaſoning each proves, that he himſelf is the poſſeſſor of the moſt noble endowments of the mind; and how excited by the deſire of proving it to others, the men of genius and learning, reciprocally depreciate each other, without perceiving that each of them being involved in the contempt he inſpires for his equals, becomes the ſport and deriſion of the public, whoſe admiration he is ambitious of obtaining.

In vain would he endeavour to diminiſh the prepoſſeſſion each has entertained in favour of his own turn of mind. We laugh at a floriſt ſtanding immovably fixed over a bed of tulips; he has his eyes continually upon them, and ſees nothing around him worthy of his admiration, but the fine mixture of the colours, which, by cultivation, he has forced nature to paint: every man is this floriſt, if he forms a judgment of the minds of men only from their knowledge of flowers; we alſo meaſure our eſteem for them only from the conformity of their ideas with our own.

Our eſteem is ſo dependent on this conformity of ideas, that no body can attentively examine themſelves, without perceiving, that in all the minutes of a day, they do not afford the ſame perſon exactly the ſame degree of eſteem; and it is always to ſome one or other of theſe contradictions, inevitable in the intimate and daily commerce with mankind, that we ought to attribute the perpetual variation of the thermometer of our eſteem: thus every man whoſe ideas are not analogous to thoſe of the people with whom he converſes, is always deſpiſed by them.

The philoſopher who lives among a ſet of coxcombs, will be the jeſt and ridicule of the company. He will find himſelf played upon by the greateſt fool amongſt them, whoſe inſipid jokes will paſs for excellent turns of wit; for the ſucceſs of the raillery depends leſs on the delicacy of the author's wit, than on his attention to ridicule none but thoſe ideas that are diſagreeable to the company. It is in pleaſantry as in pieces wrote with a party-ſpirit, which are always admired by the cabal.

The unjuſt contempt of particular claſſes of men for each other is, therefore, like the contempt of an individual for an individual, only the effect of ignorance and pride: a pride that is doubtleſs cenſurable, though it is neceſſary, and inherent in human nature. Pride is the ſeed of ſo many virtues and qualifications, that we ought neither to hope its deſtruction nor attempt to weaken it; but only to direct it to worthy purpoſes. If I here ridicule the pride of certain perſons, I doubtleſs do this only from another kind of pride,

perhaps

perhaps better intended than theirs in this particular inſtance, as being more conformable to the general intereſt; for juſtice in judgment and actions, is never any thing more than the happy union between our intereſt and that of the public (a).

If the eſteem different ſocieties entertain for certain ſentiments and ſciences is different according to the diverſity of paſſions, and the mental purſuits of thoſe who compoſe ſuch ſocieties; who can doubt, but that the different ſituations of men produce the ſame effect; and that ideas, agreeable to perſons of a certain rank, are diſagreeable to thoſe in a different ſtation? When a warrior, or a merchant, expatiates before the gentlemen of the law, one on the art of ſieges, encampments, and military evolutions, and the other on the trade of indigo, ſugar, ſilk, and cacaos, they will be heard with leſs pleaſure and avidity than the man who lays open the intrigues of the judges, the prerogatives of magiſtracy, and the manner of conducting a particular ſuit; for he will talk of the objects which their turn of mind, or their vanity, renders more particularly intereſting to them.

In general, people conſider with contempt the mind of a man who is in a ſtation inferior to theirs. Whatever merit a citizen may have, he will always be deſpiſed by a man who enjoys a high poſt, if that place-man has a weak underſtanding; "Though there is, as Domat ſays, but one civil diſ-"tinction between a citizen and a great lord, and one natural diſtinction "between a man of ſenſe and a ſtupid nobleman."

It is always then perſonal intereſt, modified according to the difference of our wants, our paſſions, our genius, and our conditions, which combining in various ſocieties, in an infinite number of ways, produces ſuch an aſtoniſhing diverſity of opinions.

It is in conſequence of this variety of intereſts, that each ſociety have their genius, their particular manner of judging, and their favourite ſpirit, which they would freely deify, if the fear of the cenſures of the public did not oppoſe ſuch an apotheoſis.

Thus we ſee the reaſon why people form themſelves into different ſocieties. There is ſcarcely a man ſo ſtupid, but, if he pays a certain attention to the choice of his company, may ſpend his life amidſt a concert of praiſes, uttered by ſincere admirers; while there is not a man of ſenſe, who, if he promiſcuouſly joins in different companies, will not be ſucceſſively treated as a fool, and a wiſe man, as agreeable and tireſome, as ſtupid and a man of genius.

The general concluſion of what I have juſt ſaid is, that perſonal intereſt in each ſociety is the only appraiſer of the merit of perſons and things. It only remains to ſhew, why men the moſt generally admired and ſought after by

(a) Intereſt preſents objects to us only with ſuch aſpects as appear uſeful to us on our perceiving them. When we judge of them as conformable to the public intereſt, we are not ſo properly to do honour to a juſt manner of thinking, or to our love of juſtice, as to being accidentally placed in ſuch a ſituation as makes it our intereſt to ſee objects in the ſame light as the public. Whoever thoroughly examines his own mind will find ſo many errors, that they will force him to be modeſt; and, inſtead of being puffed up with his own abilities, he will be ignorant of his ſuperiority. Good ſenſe like health, when we have it, we do not perceive it.

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particular ſocieties, ſuch as thoſe of which the ſuperior ſtations are compoſed, are not always eſteemed by the public.

CHAP. VII.

Of the difference between the judgments of the Public and thoſe of Private Societies.

TO dicover the cauſe of the difference between the judgments formed by the public and by private ſocieties, it muſt be obſerved, that a nation is only an aſſemblage of the citizens of which it is compoſed: that the intereſt of each citizen is always by ſome ties attached to the public intereſt: that like the ſtars, which ſuſpended in the deſerts of ſpace, are there moved by two principal motions, the firſt ſlow (a), in common with the whole univerſe, and the ſecond more rapid, and peculiar to thoſe bodies: ſo each ſociety is moved by two different kinds of intereſt.

The firſt and weaker is in common with the whole ſociety in general, that is, with the nation; and the ſecond more powerful, is abſolutely peculiar to the individual.

Conſequently from theſe two kinds of intereſt ariſe two kinds of ideas, adapted to pleaſe private ſocieties.

One, which more immediately relates to the public intereſt, and has for its object, laws, politics, commerce, war, arts, and ſciences: in this ſpecies of ideas, every individual is intereſted; this ſpecies is conſequently the more generally, and at the ſame time, the more weakly eſteemed by moſt private ſocieties. I ſay by moſt, becauſe there are ſocieties, ſuch as thoſe of the academical kind, where the ideas moſt generally uſeful are ſuch as are the moſt particularly agreeable, and where perſonal intereſt is by that means confounded with the public intereſt.

The other ſpecies of ideas has an immediate relation to the private intereſt of each little ſociety; that is, to the taſtes and averſions, to the projects and pleaſures of its members. It is therefore more intereſting and more agreeable, in the eyes of thoſe of this ſociety, who are commonly indifferent enough with reſpect to the public intereſt.

This diſtinction being admitted, whoever acquires a very great number of ideas of this laſt kind, that is, of thoſe ideas that are particularly intereſting to the ſociety in which he lives, will conſequently be regarded by them as a man of abilities: but if this man appears in a public light, either by writing a work, or by being raiſed to a high poſt, he will frequently appear in a very mean light. Thus a voice appears charming in the chamber, that is too weak for the theatre.

When a man, on the contrary, is wholly poſſeſſed by ideas, in which the whole community in general are intereſted, he will be leſs agreeable to the

(a) According to the ſyſtem of the antient philoſophers.

ſocieties

ſocieties among whom he ſpends his time. To them he will ſometimes appear inſipid, and out of his ſphere; but if he is placed in a public light either by writing a new work, or being raiſed to an eminent poſt, his genius will then ſhine, and he will merit the title of a man of ſuperior abilities. He is a large Coloſſal ſtatue that appears diſagreeable in the ſculptor's workſhop, but being raiſed in a public ſquare, becomes the admiration of the citizens.

But why do not people unite in their own minds both theſe kinds of ideas, and obtain at once the eſteem both of the nation in general, and of the individuals? This is, I reply, becauſe the kind of ſtudy to which a man muſt apply himſelf, in order to acquire ideas wherein the public is concerned, and to obtain thoſe that relate to the private ſocieties and claſſes among mankind, are abſolutely different.

If we would pleaſe the world, we muſt not dive too deep into any ſubject, but ſkim inceſſantly from one ſubject to another. Our knowledge ſhould be various, and for that reaſon it muſt be ſuperficial; we ſhould know every thing without loſing our time in learning to know every thing perfectly; and conſequently give our knowledge more ſurface than depth.

Now the public has no intereſt in eſteeming men who are univerſally ſuperficial; they perhaps do not even do them ſtrict juſtice, and never give themſelves the trouble to meaſure the abilities of a mind filled with too many different kinds of knowledge. It being only for their intereſt to eſteem thoſe who render themſelves ſuperior in one kind, and by that means improve the ſum of human knowledge; the public ought therefore to ſet but little value on the ſuperficial attainments of the multitude.

We ought then, in order to obtain a general eſteem, to give our knowledge more depth than ſurface; and to concentre, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, as in the focus of a burning glaſs, all the heat and rays of the mind. How then is it poſſible to divide our application to theſe two kinds of ſtudy, ſince the life we muſt lead to follow either the one or the other is entirely different? We can have therefore only one of theſe ſpecies of knowledge without the other.

If, in order to acquire thoſe ideas in which the public are intereſted, it is neceſſary, as I ſhall prove in the following chapters, to have recourſe to ſilence and ſolitude; it is, on the contrary, neceſſary, in order to preſent before private ſocieties ſuch ideas as are moſt agreeable to them, to mix entirely with the multitude, with whom it is impoſſible to live without filling our heads with falſe and puerile ideas: I ſay falſe, becauſe every man who is acquainted with only one ſettled manner of thought, neceſſarily conſiders thoſe of the claſs with whom he converſes as the moſt excellent ſociety in the univerſe: he is led to imitate the different nations in the contempt they mutually ſhew for the manners, religion, and even the different dreſſes of each other; where every thing appears ridiculous, that does not reſemble what they have been accuſtomed to behold; and conſequently they fall into errors of the groſſeſt kind. Whoever warmly engages himſelf in the little intereſts of private ſocieties muſt neceſſarily place too great an eſteem on trifles.

Therefore, who can flatter himſelf with here eſcaping the ſnares of ſelf-love, when he ſees that there is no attorney in his office, no counſeller in his chamber,

ber, no merchant in his compting-houſe, no officer in his garriſon, who does not believe, that the attention of mankind is fixed on him (b)?

Every one may apply to himſelf this tale of a mother in one of the convents, who being witneſs of a diſpute between the aſſiſtant and her ſuperior, aſked the firſt ſhe found in the parlour, Do you know that mother Cecilia, and mother Thereſa have juſt been quarrelling? But you are ſurprized?---- Bleſs me! is it poſſible that you can be really ignorant of their quarrel? Where do you come from? We are all of us more or leſs this mother: that in which we and our companions are employed, muſt be the employment of all mankind; what we think, believe, and ſay, muſt be thought, believed, and ſaid by the whole univerſe.

How a courtier who lives amidſt a variety of company, where nothing is talked of but the cabals and intrigues of the court, of thoſe who riſe into credit, or fall into diſgrace, and who, in the extenſive circle of his acquaintance, ſees no body who is not more or leſs affected with the ſame ſubjects; how, I ſay, can this courtier avoid perſuading himſelf, that the intrigues of the court are the objects moſt worthy of meditation, and ſuch as are the moſt generally intereſting to the human mind? Can he imagine that at the ſhop next to his own houſe, the people neither know him, nor any of thoſe who are the ſubjects of his converſation; that they do not even ſuſpect the exiſtence of the things that ſo warmly affect his imagination; that in a corner of his garret, there lives a philoſopher, to whom the intrigues and cabals formed by an ambitious man to obtain the ribbons of all the orders of knighthood in Europe, appear as puerile, and even leſs rational, than a plot formed by ſome ſchool-boys, to ſteal a box of ſugar-plums; and in whoſe opinion the ambitious are only old children, who think themſelves men?

A courtier could never imagine, that any perſon living had ſuch ſentiments; if he came to ſuſpect it, he would be like the king of Pegu, who having aſked ſome Venetians the name of their ſovereign; and they anſwering, that they were not governed by kings, thought this anſwer ſo ridiculous, that he burſt into laughter.

(b) What pleader is there, who is not in an extaſy at the reading of his Factum, and does not conſider it as a more ſerious and important affair than the works, not only of Fontenelle, but of all the philoſophers who have written on the knowledge of the heart, and of the human underſtanding? The works of the latter, ſays he, are amuſing, but frivolous, and by no means worthy of being the object of ſtudy.

To ſhew in a clear light the importance which every perſon gives to his own employments, I ſhall here quote ſome lines from the preface of a book intitled, A treatiſe on the Nightingale: "I have, ſays the author, employed twenty years in compoſing this work. Men of reflexion have always maintained, that the greateſt and the moſt refined pleaſure we are capable of taſting in this world, is that which reſults from our being ſenſible that we are of ſome uſe to ſociety: this we ought to have in view in all our actions; and he who does not thus employ himſelf in doing all he can to promote the general good of mankind, ſeems to be ignorant, that he is born as much for the advantage of others, as for his own. Such are the motives that have engaged me to preſent to the public, this Treatiſe on the Nightingale." Some lines after, the author adds: "That love of the public welfare which has induced me to publiſh this work, has not ſuffered me to forget, that it ought to be written with frankneſs and ſincerity."

The great, 'tis true, are in general not ſubject to his ſuſpicions; every one of them believes, that he fills a large and conſpicuous ſpace on this globe; and imagines, that there is only one turn of thought, which ought to be the ſtandard of thinking among mankind; and that this manner of thinking is that of all thoſe with whom he converſes. If from time to time, he hears, that there are opinions different from his own, he perceives them only as at a diſtance, where the objects are confuſed, and imagines them confined to the heads of a ſmall number of ſtupid mortals. He is, in this reſpect, as ſilly as the Chineſe geographer, who, filled with an extravagant love for his native country, drew a map of the world, that was almoſt entirely covered by the empire of China, on the confines of which, could juſt be perceived Aſia, Africa, Europe, and America. Each is to himſelf the whole univerſe, and the others are nothing.

We ſee then, that a man being forced to render himſelf agreeable to the little ſociety in which he is placed; to apply himſelf to trifling concerns, and to adopt a thouſand prejudices, he muſt inſenſibly crowd his brain with an infinite number of ideas that will appear abſurd and ridiculous, when expoſed to the public obſervation.

I however, with great pleaſure obſerve, that by theſe courtiers I do not mean all in high ſtations: a Turenne, a Richelieu, a Luxembourg, a Rouchefoucault, a Retz, and many others prove, that folly is not the neceſſary lot of all in an elevated rank; and that by the above we are to underſtand only thoſe who never move, but in their own vortices.

Theſe are the men whom the public have, with ſuch good reaſon, conſidered as abſolutely void of ſenſe. I ſhall bring as a proof of it their ridiculous and excluſive pretenſions, to an elegant manner of ſpeaking and a polite behaviour. Theſe pretenſions I the more freely chuſe as an example, becauſe the young men, the dupes of the jargon of the world, too often take affectation for wit, and good ſenſe for folly.

CHAP. IX.

Of an elegant manner of Speaking, and a polite Behaviour.

EVERY little ſociety divided by taſte and intereſt, reſpectively accuſe each other with having a bad manner of ſpeech; that of the young men diſpleaſes the old, that of the paſſionate man he who is of a phlegmatic diſpoſition, and that of the monk the man of the world.

If they underſtand by a good, or elegant manner, that proper to pleaſe equally in all companies; there is no man who has a good manner. For, in order to be poſſeſſed of this qualification, he ought to be acquainted with all kinds of knowledge, all kinds of wit, and perhaps all the different jargons; which is abſolutely impoſſible. We can then only underſtand by the words, Elegant Manner, that kind of converſation where both the ideas and the expreſſions in which they are cloathed ought the moſt generally adapted to

pleaſe,

Pleaſe. Now the elegant manner, thus defined, belongs to no one claſs of men in particular, but only to thoſe who employ themſelves upon grand and important ſubjects; and being verſed in the arts and ſciences, as morality, metaphyſics, war, commerce, and politics, conſtantly preſent to the mind objects that are of the utmoſt importance to human beings. This kind of converſation is doubtleſs the moſt generally intereſting; but it is not, as I have already obſerved, the moſt agreeable to ſome particular ſocieties. Every one of theſe ſocieties regards their manner of ſpeaking as ſuperior to that of the men of wit, and that of the men of wit as ſimply ſuperior to that of every other kind.

Little ſocieties are, in this reſpect, like the peaſants of different provinces, who ſpeak more readily the jargon of their own village than the language of the nation; but prefer the national language to the dialect of any of the other provinces. A good manner of ſpeaking is what each ſociety conſiders as the beſt except his own, and that this manner is that of the men of wit.

I however confeſs, that were it neceſſary to chuſe to which manner we ought to give the preference, it would, beyond all contradiction, fall to that of the courtiers. Not but that a citizen has as many ideas: both frequently talk without a meaning; and with reſpect to ideas, neither has any advantage over the other; but the former, from the advantages of his ſituation, obtains thoſe ideas that are more generally intereſting.

In fact, if the manners, the inclinations, the prejudices, and the character of kings, have a conſiderable influence on the happineſs or unhappineſs of the public, every circumſtance relating to them muſt be highly intereſting. The converſation of a man attached to the court, who cannot ſpeak of his own employments, without frequently mentioning his maſter, is therefore not ſo inſipid as that of a citizen. Beſides, perſons of high rank, being generally raiſed greatly above want, and having ſcarcely any thing elſe to do but to render themſelves agreeable, it is certain that their converſation muſt, in this reſpect alſo, receive great advantages from their ſtation; this generally renders the ladies of the court ſo ſuperior to other women in graces, in wit, and vivacity; and for this reaſon the women of genius are almoſt entirely compoſed of the ladies of the court.

But though the manner of ſpeaking at court, is ſuperior to that of the citizen, the great, not having always curious anecdotes to repeat of the private life of kings, their converſation moſt commonly turns on the privileges of their employments, on thoſe of their birth, on their adventures of gallantry, and on the ridiculous incidents of an evening; converſations that muſt appear inſipid to moſt other ſocieties.

Courtiers are then exactly in the ſame caſe as perſons cloſely employed in any buſineſs or mechanic art; they make them the only and perpetual ſubject of converſation: in conſequence of this, they are taxed with a bad manner of ſpeaking; becauſe thoſe who are diſguſted always revenge themſelves by giving a contemptuous word to thoſe who fill them with diſguſt.

It will be replied perhaps, That no ſociety accuſes the great of having a bad manner of expreſſion; but if moſt ſocieties are ſilent in this reſpect, it is becauſe it is impoſed upon them by birth and titles, which prevent their diſcovering their ſentiments, and frequently hinders their countenancing them,

even in their own minds. To be convinced of this, let us examine a man of good ſenſe on this ſubject. The manner in which the great expreſs themſelves, he will ſay, is very frequently full of affectation. This manner uſed at court was doubtleſs introduced there by ſome perſon engaged in intrigues, who, to throw a veil over his deſigns, reſolved to talk without ſaying any thing: the dupes of this affectation followed his example, without having any thing to conceal. They borrowed the jargon of the firſt, and fancied they uttered ſomething very fine, when they pronounced words ſo melodiouſly arrayed. The men in place, in order to divert the great from attending to affairs of an important nature, and to render them incapable of applying to them, applauded this manner of ſpeaking, allowed it to be termed wit, and were the firſt in giving it that name. But whatever elogiums are given to this jargon, if we eſtimate the merit of the pretty turns and phraſes ſo admired in polite companies, by tranſlating them into another language, the tranſlation will remove our prejudices in their favour, and moſt of the phraſes will be found void of ſenſe. Therefore many people have the greateſt contempt for theſe ſhining geniuſes, and frequently repeat this verſe of the play:

"When a good manner appears, good ſenſe retires."

The true elegant manner of ſpeaking, is therefore, that of the man of ſenſe, in whatſoever ſtation he is placed.

I will add, that the courtiers applying themſelves to very few ideas, are in this reſpect inferior to men of genius, but are ſuperior to them in the manner of expreſſing their ideas; and their pretenſions here appear beyond all contradiction to be well founded. Though words in themſelves are neither noble nor mean, and in a country where the people are reſpected, as in England, they neither do, nor ought to make this diſtinction; yet in a monarchy, where the people are held in no eſteem, 'tis certain, that words ought to take either the one, or the other of theſe denominations, according as they are uſed or rejected at court; and thus the expreſſions of the courtiers muſt always be elegant; but moſt courtiers employing themſelves only about trifles, the dictionary of the noble language is for this reaſon very ſhort, and is not ſufficient even for a romance, in which theſe of high rank, who attempt to write, often find themſelves much inferior to men of letters (a).

With reſpect to thoſe ſubjects that are conſidered as ſerious, and at the ſame time connected with philoſophy and the arts, experience informs us, that the great

(a) What creates the greateſt prejudice in favour of the great, is the eaſy air, and the pleaſing geſtures that accompany their diſcourſe, which ought to be conſidered as the effect of the confidence neceſſarily inſpired by the advantage of their rank; and, in this reſpect, they are therefore, commonly much ſuperior to men of learning. Now, as declamation is, according to Ariſtotle, the firſt part of eloquence, they may, in converſing on trifles, have, on this account, the advantage over men of letters. An advantage which they loſe in writing, not only becauſe they are not then ſupported by the deluſive arts of declamation, but becauſe their writings are only in the ſtyle of their converſations; and we commonly write ill, when we write as we ſpeak.

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can here ſcarcely ſtammer out their meaning (b): whence it follows, that in regard to expreſſion, they are not ſuperior to men of learning; and that, in this reſpect, they have no advantage over common men, except in trifling, which they have made their ſtudy, and in a manner formed into a particular art; but this ſuperiority is not yet well eſtabliſhed, and yet almoſt all men exaggerate it, from a mechanical reſpect they ſhew to birth and titles.

But ridiculous as this excluſive privilege of having a good manner of ſpeaking may appear in the great, it is leſs a ridicule peculiar to their ſtation, than to human nature. Why ſhould not pride perſuade the great that they, and thoſe of their claſs, are endued with minds more adapted to pleaſe in converſation, when the ſame pride has fully perſuaded nearly all men in general, that nature has lighted the ſun only to give fertility to this little point called the earth, and diſſeminated the firmament with ſtars, only to enlighten it during the night?

Men are vain, full of contempt, and conſequently unjuſt, whenever they can be ſo with impunity. For which reaſon, all men imagine, that on this globe there is no part of it; in this part of the earth, no nation; in the nation, no province; in the province, no city; in the city, no ſociety comparable to ours; we think ourſelves ſuperior to all our acquaintance; and, ſtep by ſtep, ſurprize ourſelves into a ſecret perſuaſion, that we are the firſt perſons in the univerſe (c). Thus fooliſh as the excluſive pretenſions to an elegant manner of ſpeaking may be, and how ridiculous ſoever the public may repreſent the great in this reſpect, this folly will always meet with favour from an indulgent and ſound philoſophy, which ought to ſpare them the mortification of taſting the bitterneſs of uſeleſs remedies.

If an oyſter, confined within his ſhell, is acquainted with no more of the univerſe than the rock on which it is fixed; and therefore cannot judge of its extent: how can the courtier, involved in the midſt of a little ſociety, always ſurrounded by the ſame objects, and acquainted with only one train of thoughts, be able to judge of the merit of things?

Truth is never ingendered and perceived, but in the fermentation of contrary opinions. The univerſe is only known to us in proportion as we become acquainted with it. Whoever confines himſelf to converſing with one ſet of companions, cannot avoid adopting their prejudices, eſpecially if they flatter his pride.

Who can ſeparate himſelf from an error, when vanity, the companion of ignorance, has tied him to it, and rendered it dear to him.

Through an effect of the ſame vanity, the courtiers imagine themſelves the ſole poſſeſſors of a polite behaviour; which, according to them, is the higheſt merit, and without which, no ſuch thing as merit can ſubſiſt. They do not perceive that this behaviour, which they call the cuſtom of the world, by way of excellence, is only the cuſtom of thoſe with whom they converſe. At Monomotapa, when the king ſneezes, all the courtiers are obliged, through

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(b) I only ſpeak in this chapter of thoſe of the great, who have never exerted and improved the powers of the mind.

(c) See The Mock-Pedant, a comedy by Cyrano de Bergerac.

polite-

politeneſs, to ſneeze alſo; and the ſneezing ſpreading from the court to the city, and from the city to the provinces, the whole empire ſeems to have gotten a cold. Who can doubt, but that there are ſome courtiers who value themſelves in ſneezing in a more noble manner than other men, who do not conſider themſelves, as in this reſpect, the only poſſeſſors of the polite behaviour; and treat as bad company, or as barbarians, every individual, and all the nations whoſe ſneezing appears to them leſs harmonious?

Do not the inhabitants of the Marian iſlands pretend that civility conſiſts in taking hold of the foot of him to whom they would do honour, in gently ſtroking the face, and in never ſpitting before a ſuperior.

Do not the Chiriguanes maintain, that it is proper they ſhould have breeches; but that the politeſt manner of wearing them is under the arm, as we do our hats?

Do not the inhabitants of the Philippines ſay, that it is not the buſineſs of the huſband to make his wife taſte the firſt pleaſures of love; that this is a trouble which he hires another to diſcharge? Do not they add, that a girl who is a maid at the time of her marriage is void of merit, and only worthy of contempt?

Do they not maintain at Pegu, that it is the moſt polite and decent behaviour for the king to advance into the audience-chamber, with a fan in his hand, preceded by four of the moſt beautiful young men of the court, who are deſtined to his pleaſures; and are at the ſame time his interpreters, and the heralds who declare his will?

Were I to run through all the nations, I ſhould every where find a different behaviour (d): and each people, in particular, would neceſſarily think themſelves in the poſſeſſion of that which is the moſt polite. Now, if there is nothing more ridiculous than ſuch pretenſions, even in the eyes of our courtiers; if they do but return from theſe to themſelves, they will ſee that, under different names, they ridicule their own conduct.

To prove that what they here call, The cuſtom of the world, is ſo far from being univerſally pleaſing, that it muſt generally diſpleaſe, let us tranſport ſucceſſively, the petit maitre moſt learned in the geſtures, attitudes, and behaviour called, The cuſtom of the world, to China, Holland, and England; and

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(d) In the kingdom of Juida, when the inhabitants meet, they throw themſelves down from the hammocks in which they are; place themſelves on their knees over againſt each other; kiſs the ground, clap their hands, make their compliments, and riſe. The people in this country certainly believe that their manner of ſaluting is the moſt polite.

The inhabitants of the Manillas ſay, that politeneſs requires that they ſhould bow their bodies very low, put each of their hands on their cheeks, and raiſe up one foot from the ground, keeping the knees bent.

The ſavage of New Orleans maintained, that we failed in politeneſs towards our kings. "When I preſent myſelf, ſaid he, to the "great chief, I ſalute him with a howl; "then I run to the bottom of the cabbin, with-"out caſting a ſingle glance to the right-ſide "when the chief is ſeated. There I renew "my ſalutation, raiſing my hands upon my "head, and howling three times. The "chief invites me to ſit by a low ſigh: upon "which I thank him with another howl. At "every queſtion the chief aſks me, I howl "once before I anſwer him; and I take leave "of him by drawling out a howl 'till I am out "of his preſence."

with him ſend a man of ſenſe, whoſe ignorance in theſe particulars has occaſioned his being treated as ſtupid, or as bad company; it is certain, that the latter will paſs among theſe ſeveral people as better inſtructed in the true behaviour of the world than the former?

But whence would they form ſuch a judgment? It is, becauſe reaſon, independent of the modes and cuſtoms of a country, is no where a ſtranger, and no where ridiculous; but, on the contrary, the cuſtoms of a country where they are unknown, always render him who obſerves them ridiculous, in proportion as he is more attentive to fulfil what he believes to be polite behaviour?

If, to avoid the dull and methodical air that is held in abhorrence by good company, our young men often play the fool; who can doubt but that, in the eyes of the Engliſh, the Germans, and the Spaniards, our petit maitre will not appear the more ridiculous, as they are more attentive to perform what they believe to be polite behaviour?

It is therefore certain, at leaſt if we may judge from the reception given to our perſons of diſtinction in foreign countries, that what they call the uſage of the world, is ſo far from pleaſing univerſally, that it muſt be more generally diſpleaſing; and that it is as different from the true cuſtom of the world, which is always founded on reaſon, as civility is from true politeneſs.

The one only ſuppoſes manners; the other a refined, delicate, and habitual benevolence to mankind.

However, though there is nothing more ridiculous than theſe excluſive pretenſions to an elegant manner of expreſſion, and a polite behaviour, it is ſo difficult, as I have obſerved above, to live in the ſocietes of the great, without adopting ſome of their errors, that men of ſenſe, who are moſt on their guard, are not always ſure of keeping clear of them. Hence, errors of this kind are extremely multiplied, which has determined the public to place the agreeable in the rank of the falſe and little geniuſes: I ſay little, becauſe the mind which is neither great nor little in itſelf, always borrows one or other of theſe denominations ſtom the grandeur or the ſmallneſs of the objects it conſiders; and the courtiers can ſcarce apply themſelves to any other but little objects.

It follows from the two preceding chapters, that the public intereſt is almoſt always different from that of private ſocieties; and that, in conſequence of this, the men moſt eſteemed in theſe ſocieties, are not always, in the opinion of the public, moſt worthy of eſteem.

I ſhall now ſhew, that thoſe who merit the greateſt eſteem from the public, muſt, by their manner of living and turn of thought, be moſt diſagreeable to private ſocieties.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Why men admired by the public, are not always eſteemed by the men of the world.

IN order to pleaſe private ſocieties, it is not neceſſary the horizon of our ideas ſhould be very capacious; but we ought to engage in converſation, and to ſtudy and know the world: on the contrary, to obtain a great reputation in any art or ſcience whatſoever, and by that means to obtain the public eſteem, requires, as I have ſaid above, a very different kind of ſtudy.

Suppoſe men deſirous of ſtudying moral philoſophy; it is only by the aſſiſtance of hiſtory, and the wings of meditation, that they can, according to the different powers of their minds, raiſe themſelves to different heights; whence one diſcovers cities, another nations, this one part of the world, and the other the whole univerſe. It is only by contemplating the earth in this point of view, and raiſing to this height, that it inſenſibly diminiſhes, under the eye of the philoſopher, to a ſmall ſpace; and to his view takes the form of a village inhabited by different families that bear the name of Chineſe, Engliſh, French, Italian, and in ſhort, all thoſe we give to the different nations. Thus, bringing before him the manners, laws, cuſtoms, religions, and the different paſſions that actuate mankind, he becomes almoſt inſenſible, both to the praiſe and the ſatire of nations, can break all the chains of prejudice, examine with a tranquil eye the contrary opinions that divide the human ſpecies; paſs, without aſtoniſhment, from a ſeraglio to a chartreuſe, contemplate with pleaſure the extent of human folly, and ſee, with the ſame eye, Alcibiades cut off the tail of his dog, and Mahomet ſhut himſelf up in a cavern, the one to ridicule the folly of the Athenians, and the other to enjoy the adoration of the world.

Now ſuch ideas never preſent themſelves but in ſilence and ſolitude. If the muſes, ſay the poets, love the woods, meadows, and fountains, it is becauſe they enjoy there, the tranquility that flies from cities. The reflections made there on himſelf, by a man detached from the little intereſts of ſociety, are the reflections made on man in general: they therefore belong to, and pleaſe human nature. Now, in this ſolitude, where we are, in a manner, in ſpite of ourſelves, led to the ſtudy of arts and ſciences; how then can we employ ourſelves in the little affairs that are the daily entertainment of the men of the world?

Hence, our Corneille, and la Fontaine, have ſometimes appeared inſipid amidſt the ſprightly mirth of good company; their merit itſelf has contributed to make them thought ſo. How can the men of the world diſcover the illuſtrious man under the cloak of modeſty? There are few men ſkilled in true merit. If moſt of the Romans, as Tacitus ſays, deceived by the mildneſs and ſimplicity of Agricola, ſought for the great man under his exterior modeſty, without being able to find him; we muſt be ſenſible that, happy in eſcaping the con-

contempt of private ſocieties, the great man, eſpecially if he be modeſt, muſt renounce a Felt-eſteem for moſt of them. He is therefore, but feebly moved by the deſire of pleaſing them. He has a confuſed idea, that the eſteem of theſe ſocieties can only prove the analogy between his ideas and theirs; that this analogy would often be of little advantage to his reputation, and that the public eſteem is the only one worthy of envy; the only one deſireable; ſince it is always a teſtimony of the public gratitude, and conſequently a proof of real merit. The great man therefore, incapable of any of the efforts neceſſary to pleaſe private ſocieties, finds every thing poſſible in his endeavours to merit the general eſteem. As the pride of commanding kings recompenſed the Romans for enduring the ſeverity of military diſcipline, ſo the noble pleaſure of being eſteemed, comforts the illuſtrious man, even under the unjuſt frowns of fortune; and if he has obtained this eſteem, he thinks himſelf the poſſeſſor of the moſt deſirable wealth. In fact, whatſoever indifference we affect to ſhew for the public opinion, every one ſeeks for ſelf-eſteem, and believes that he is more worthy of it, in proportion as he finds himſelf more generally eſteemed.

As our wants, our paſſions, and above all, our indolence, does not ſtifle in our minds this deſire of eſteem, there is no perſon who does not ſtrive to deſerve it, and does not deſire the public ſuffrage as a ſurety for the high opinion he has of himſelf. Therefore, a contempt for reputation, and the ſacrifice ſaid to be made of it to fortune and reflection, is always inſpired by the deſpair of rendering ourſelves illuſtrious.

We boaſt of what we have, and deſpiſe what we have not. This is a neceſſary effect of pride; and we ſhould rebel againſt it, were we not its dupes. It would in this caſe be too cruel to inform a man of the true motives of his contempt, and merit is never led to commit ſo barbarous an action. Every man, (let me be permitted to obſerve by the way) when he is not born wicked, and when his paſſions do not extinguiſh the light of reaſon, will be always more indulgent, in proportion as he is more enlightened. That this is a truth, I ſhall the more readily prove, as by doing juſtice in this reſpect, to the man of merit, I ſhall be able, even from the motives of his indulgence, the more plainly to ſhew the cauſe of the little value he ſets on the eſteem of particular ſocieties, and conſequently the little ſucceſs he can have in obtaining it.

If the great man is always the moſt indulgent; if he conſiders as a benefit, all the evil that is not done him, and as a gift, all that the wickedneſs of mankind ſuffer him to enjoy; if he pours over the faults of others, the lenient balm of pity, and is ſlow in diſcovering them; it is becauſe the elevation of his mind will not permit him to expatiate upon the vices and follies of ſingle perſons, but upon thoſe of mankind in general. If he conſiders their faults, it is not with the malevolent eye of envy, which is always unjuſt, but with the ſerenity wherewith two men, deſirous of knowing the human heart, and of obtaining a knowledge of the mind, reciprocally examine each other as two ſubjects of inſtruction, and two living ſtreams of moral experience; very different, in this reſpect, from the half wits; who, ambitious of a reputation that flies from them, bloated with the poiſon of jealouſy, and inceſſantly upon the watch for the faults of others, loſe all their little merit, if men ceaſe to be-

come ridiculous. The knowledge of the human mind is not to be obtained by ſuch men as theſe: they are formed only to extinguiſh noble talents by the efforts they make to ſtifle them. Merit is like gunpowder, the ſtrength of whoſe exploſion is in proportion to the degree in which it is compreſſed. But, what hatred ſoever we bear to theſe envious perſons, they are more to be pitied than blamed. The preſence of merit gives them pain: if they attack it as an enemy, and if they are wicked, it is becauſe they are unhappy; it is becauſe they endeavour to puniſh the offence merit has given to their vanity: their crimes are only acts of revenge.

Another motion of the indulgence granted by the man of merit, ſprings from the knowledge of the human mind. He has ſo often experienced its weakneſs, in the midſt of the applauſes of an Areopagus, that he is frequently tempted, like Phocion, to return to his friend, to aſk him if he had not uttered ſomething very fooliſh; and being always on his guard againſt vanity, he freely excuſes in others, the errors into which he himſelf has ſometimes fallen. He perceives that it is to the multitude of fools we owe the expreſſion "a man of genius;" and that, in gratitude, he ought to bear, without being offended, the abuſe thrown upon him by men of mean abilities. He knows, that if theſe laſt ſecretly boaſt among themſelves of their rendering merit ridiculous, and of the contempt they pretend to feel for it, they are like thoſe bullies in impiety who blaſpheme with trembling.

The laſt cauſe I ſhall mention of the indulgence ſhewn by men of merit, ſprings from the clear views of the neceſſity of human deciſions. They know that our ideas, if I may thus venture to expreſs myſelf, ſo neceſſarily proceed from the company we keep, the books we read, and the objects preſented to our ſight, that a ſuperior intelligence might equally divine our thoughts, from the objects preſented before us; and, from our thoughts, divine the number and nature of the objects offered to the mind.

The perſon of diſcernment knows that men are what they were deſigned to be; and that all hatred againſt them is therefore unjuſt; that a fool bears follies as a wild ſtock bears bitter fruit; that to inſult him, is to reproach the oak for bearing acorns, and not olives; that if the man of mean abilities appears ſtupid to him; he in return appears a fool to the man of abilities; for as all fools are void of underſtanding, a man of genius will always appear a fool to a man of mean intellects. Indulgence then is always the effect of ſuperior light, when it is not intercepted by the paſſions. But that indulgence, principally founded on the elevation of ſoul inſpired by the love of glory, renders the man of abilities very different with reſpect to the eſteem of private ſocieties. Now this indifference, joined to a different kind of life, and to ſtudies very unlike thoſe that are neceſſary to pleaſe either the public, or what is called good company, will almoſt always render a man of merit diſagreeable to the men of the world.

The general concluſion of what I have ſaid on the mind, in regard to particular ſocieties is, that ſolely employed about their own intereſt, each ſociety meaſures on the ſcale of the ſame intereſt the degree of eſteem it grants to different kinds of underſtandings and ideas. It is with very ſmall ſocieties, as with a ſingle perſon, who, if he has a ſuit at law of great conſequence, will receive his advocate with more complaiſance, and with greater teſtimonies of reſpect and eſteem,

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than he would receive Deſcartes, Locke, or Corneille; but the ſuit being ended, he would ſhew an higher reſpect for the latter. Thus the difference of his ſituation determines the reception he gives to each.

I would, in finiſhing this chapter, endeavour to encourage the ſmall number of modeſt men, who, diſtracted by buſineſs, or the care of their fortunes, can make no trial of their great talents; and conſequently, cannot, on the principles above eſtabliſhed, know whether, with reſpect to genius, they are really worthy of eſteem. But whatever deſire I have to do them juſtice in this reſpect, it muſt be confeſſed, that a man who declares that he has a great genius, without giving any proof of his abilities, is exactly in the caſe of a man who pretends to be noble, without having any titles of nobility. The public can neither know nor eſteem any merit, that is not proved by facts. Are they to judge of men of different ranks, they aſk the military man, What victory have you obtained? The man in place, What relief have you afforded to the miſeries of the people? To a private perſon, By what work have you enlightened the human mind? And whoever can make no anſwer to theſe queſtions, is neither known, nor eſteemed by the public.

I am ſenſible that, ſeduced by the deluſions of power, by the ſurrounding pomp of grandeur, and the hope of the favours diſtributed by a perſon in an important place, a great number of men mechanically acknowledge great merit, wherever they perceive great power. But their elogiums, as fleeting as the credit of thoſe on whom they are beſtowed, cannot impoſe on the ſenſible part of the public. Sheltered from influence, exempt from all private intereſt, the public jugde as the ſtranger; who acknowledges for a man of merit, only him who is diſtinguiſhed by his talents; it is he alone whom the ſtranger ſeeks with eagerneſs: an eagerneſs that is always pleaſing to him who is the object of it (a). When we are not adorned with dignities, this is a certain ſign of real merit.

He who would exactly know his own value, can then only learn it from the public, and ought therefore to expoſe himſelf to its judgment. We know the ridicule affected to be thrown on thoſe who attempt to obtain the eſteem of the nation by being authors: but this ridicule makes no impreſſion on the man of merit; he will conſider them as an effect of the jealouſy of thoſe little minds, who imagining, that if no body gives a proof of merit, they themſelves might the more eaſily arrive at it: this however is the only means by which a perſon can either merit, or obtain the eſteem of the public.

If we caſt our eyes on all thoſe great wits ſo much boaſted of in particular companies, we ſhall ſee that, being placed by the public in the rank of men of abilities, they owe the reputation for wit with which ſome have decorated them, only to their being incapable of proving their folly, even by a bad work. Thus, among theſe prodigies, thoſe who promiſe moſt, if I may dare to uſe the expreſſion, are, with reſpect to genius, neither more nor leſs than a Perhaps.

(a) Fontenelle was never better pleaſed with any elogium than with the queſtion of a Swede, who, entering Paris, aſked the officers of the barrier, where M. de Fontenelle lived? And they not being able to inform him, How, ſaid he, are you Frenchmen ignorant of the abode of your moſt illuſtrious citizens? You are unworthy of ſuch a man.

This truth, however certain it may be, and what reaſon ſoever modeſt men have to doubt the reality of the merit that has often paſſed the crucible of the public, yet, with reſpect to genius, a man may believe himſelf really worthy of the general eſteem; firſt, when he feels the higheſt regard for ſuch men as are moſt eſteemed by the public and by foreign nations; ſecondly, when he is praiſed (b), as Cicero ſays, by a man already praiſed; and laſtly, when he obtains the eſteem of thoſe who, in their works, or in poſts of eminence, have already diſcovered great abilities: their eſteem for him ſuppoſes a great analogy between his ideas and theirs; and that analogy may be conſidered, if not as a complete proof, at leaſt, as a very high probability, that if he was, like them, expoſed to public notice, he would, like them, have a ſhare in the public eſteem.

CHAP. XI.

Of Probity in relation to the Public.

I Shall not in this chapter treat of Probity, with reſpect to a particular perſon, or a private ſociety; but of true probity: of probity conſidered in relation to the public. This kind of probity is the only one that really merits, and has in general obtained the name. It is only conſidering it in this point of view, that we can form clear ideas of honeſty, and diſcover a guide to virtue.

Now, under this aſpect, I ſay that the public, like particular ſocieties, is only determined in its judgments by motives of intereſt; that it does not give the name of noble to great and heroic actions, but to thoſe that are of public uſe; and that the eſteem of the public, for ſuch and ſuch an action, is not proportioned to the degree of ſtrength, courage, or generoſity, neceſſary to execute it, but to the importance of that action, and the public advantage derived from it.

In fact, when encouraged by the preſence of an army, one man alone fights three men who are wounded: this is doubtleſs a brave action; but it is what a thouſand of our grenadiers are capable of; and for which they will never be mentioned in hiſtory: but when the ſafety of an empire formed to ſubdue the univerſe, depends on the ſucceſs of this battle, Horatius is an hero, he is the admiration of his fellow-citizens, and his name, celebrated in hiſtory, is handed down to the moſt diſtant ages.

Two perſons threw themſelves into a gulph; this was an action common to Sapho and Curtius; but the firſt did it to put an end to the torments of love, and the other to ſave Rome; Sapho was therefore a fool, and Curtius a hero. In vain have ſome philoſophers given the name of folly to each of theſe actions; the public ſee clearer than they, and never gives the name of fool to thoſe from whom it receives advantage.

(b) The degree of genius neceſſary to pleaſe us, is pretty nearly the ſame proportion that we ourſelves have.

CHAP. XII.

Of Genius in relation to the Public.

LET us apply to Genius what I have ſaid on Probity, and we ſhall ſee that the public is invariable in its deciſions, and never conſults any thing but its intereſt; that it does not proportion its eſteem to the different ſpecies of genius; or to the unequal difficulty of thoſe ſpecies; that is, to the number and delicacy of the ideas neceſſary to ſucceed; but only to the greater or leſſer advantage derived from it.

If an ignorant general gains three battles over a general ſtill more ignorant than himſelf, he will, at leaſt, during life, be inveſted with a glory that is never granted to the moſt excellent painter in the world. The latter has however merited the title of a great painter, by a remarkable ſuperiority over other greatmaſters, and excelling in an art, without doubt leſs neceſſary, but perhaps more difficult than that of war. I ſay more difficult, becauſe, on opening hiſtory, we ſee an infinite number of men, as Epaminondas, Lucullus, Alexander, Mahomet, Spinola, Cromwel, and Charles XII. in an inſtant obtain the reputation of great generals, and the firſt day they took the command, defeated armies; but no painter, how happy ſoever the genius he has received from nature, is cited among the illuſtrious painters, who has not at leaſt ſpent ten or twelve years of his life in the preliminary ſtudies of that art. Why then is a greater eſteem granted to an ignorant general than to an able painter?

This unequal diſtribution of glory, ſo unjuſt in appearance, proceeds from the inequality of the advantages theſe two men procure to the nation. If it be ſtill demanded, why the public aſcribes that ſuperior genius to an able negotiator, which it refuſes to allow to a celebrated advocate? Does the importance of the affairs with which the firſt is intruſted, prove that he has a genius ſuperior to that of the ſecond? Does it not frequently require as much ſagacity and art to diſcuſs the intereſts, and terminate the ſuit of two lords in a pariſh, as to pacify two nations? Why then is the public ſo avaricious of its eſteem to the advocate, and ſo prodigal of it to the negotiator? It is becauſe the public, whenever it is not blinded by prejudice or ſuperſtition, is capable of very refined reaſonings on its own concerns. The inſtinct that makes it refer every thing to its intereſt, is like the æther, which penetrates all bodies, without making any ſenſible impreſſion upon them. The public has leſs need of painters and celebrated advocates, than of able generals and negotiators; it attaches therefore to the talents of theſe laſt the eſteem always neceſſary to engage ſome citizen to acquire them.

On which ſide ſoever we turn our eyes, we ſhall always ſee intereſt preſide in the diſtribution the public makes of its eſteem.

When the Dutch erected a ſtatue to William Buckelſt, who had taught them the ſecret of ſalting and barreling herrings, they did not confer this honour

nour upon him on account of the extent of genius neceſſary for that diſcovery; but from the importance of the ſecret, and the advantage it procured to the nation.

When the petty Auguſtins ſent a deputation to Rome, to obtain the permiſſion of the holy ſee to cut their beards, who knows, but that father Euſtacius employed in that negotiation as much genius and refinement as the preſident Jeannin in his negociation in Holland? Nothing can be affirmed on this ſubject. To what then do we attribute the ſenſation of laughter, or the eſteem excited by theſe two different negotiations, if it be not to the difference of their objects? We always ſuppoſe that great effects ſpring from great cauſes. A man enjoys a high poſt, and by the poſition in which he is placed, he performs great things with very ſmall abilities: this man will paſs with the multitude, as far ſuperior to him as who, in an inferior poſt, and in leſs happy circumſtances, can ſcarcely, with great abilities, execute little things. Theſe two men are like unequal weights, applied to the different ends of a long lever, where the lighteſt weight placed at one of the extremities, raiſes up a weight ten times heavier, placed nearer the point of ſupport.

Now, if the public, as I have proved, always judges according to its own intereſt, and is entirely indifferent with reſpect to all other conſiderations; and being an enthuſiaſtic admirer of the arts from which it receives advantage, it ought not to require of the artiſts, who cultivate them, that high degree of perfection, which is abſolutely neceſſary for thoſe who attach themſelves to the arts leſs uſeful, and in which it is frequently more difficult to ſucceed. Therefore, men, according as they apply themſelves to arts, more or leſs uſeful, may be compared to tools and jewels: the firſt are always eſteemed good, when the ſteel is well tempered, and the ſecond are valued only according as they are perfect. Hence our vanity is always the more flattered with our ſucceſs, when we obtain it in a way leſs uſeful to the public, where we with greater difficulty merit its approbation, and where the ſucceſs neceſſarily ſuppoſes more genius and perſonal merit.

By what different prejudices is the public affected, when it judges of the merit of an author, or of a general? Does it form a judgment of the firſt? It compares him with all thoſe who have excelled in that kind of writing, and grants him its eſteem only as he ſurpaſſes, or at leaſt equals, thoſe who have preceded him. Does it judge of the merit of a general? It makes no enquiry, before it beſtows its praiſes, whether he equals in ability a Cæſar, a Scipio, or a Sertorius. If a dramatic poet writes a good tragedy upon a plot already known, he is called a deſpicable plagiary; but if a general, in a campaign, draws up his troops in the ſame order of battle, and makes uſe of the ſame ſtratagems that have been practiſed by a former general, he is frequently the more eſteemed for it.

If an author gains the prize over ſixty competitors, yet, if the public does not acknowledge the merit of thoſe competitors; or if their works are too inſignificant, the author and his ſucceſs are ſoon forgotten.

But when a general has triumphed, has the public, before his being crowned, ever ſtated the ability and valour of the conquered? Is the general required to have that refined and delicate ſentiment of military glory, which at the death of M. de Turenne, determiued M. de Montecuculi to quit the command

mand of the army? They can no longer, said he, oppose against me, an enemy worthy of me.

The public then weighs in very different scales, the merit of an author and that of a general. Now why does it contemn in the one, the mediocrity it frequently admires in the other? It is because it derives no advantage from the mediocrity of a writer; and may derive very great ones from that of a general, where ignorance is sometimes crowned with success. Its interest therefore requires, that he should prize in the one, what it despises in the other.

Besides, if the public happiness depends on the merit of men in great employments; and if great posts are seldom filled by great men, in order to induce men of moderate abilities to perform their enterprizes with all the prudence and activity of which they are capable, it is necessary to flatter them with the hopes of great glory. This hope alone may elevate, even to moderate abilities, those who would never have had them, if the public was a too severe judge of their merit, and had given them a disgust for its esteem, from the difficulty of obtaining it.

This is the cause of the secret indulgence with which the public forms a judgment of men in great employments; an indulgence that is sometimes blind in the people, but always attended with discernment in the man enlightened with knowledge. The latter knows, that men are influenced by objects that surround them; that flattery, assiduous with the great, is mixed with all the instructions that are given them; and therefore, that we cannot, without injustice, demand from them as many virtues and abilities as are required from a private person.

If a judicious spectator hisses at the French theatre what he applauds in the Italian; if in a fine woman, and a pretty child, every thing is graceful, witty, and genteel, why should the great be treated with less indulgence? We may lawfully admire in them, the abilities commonly found among private obscure persons; because it is more difficult for them to acquire them. Spoil'd by flattery, like handsome women by their admirers; engaged in a thousand pleasures, and distracted with a thousand cares, they have not, like a philosopher, leisure for thought to acquire a great number of ideas (a), or to enlarge the bounds of their own genius, and that of the human mind. It is not to the great that we owe discoveries in the arts and sciences; their hand has not formed a plan of the heavens and earth; has not built ships, erected palaces, forged plow-shares, nor even written the first laws: it was the philosophers who polished mankind, and from societies of savages raised societies to the degrees of perfection, to which they are now arrived. If we had been only assisted by the knowledge of men in power, perhaps we might yet have had neither corn for food, nor sciffars to cut our nails.

(a) This was it that probably made M. Nicole assert, that God has given genius to men of the common class, to recompense them for the other advantages the great have over them. Though he adds, I don't believe that God has condemned the great to have mean abilities: but if most of them have but a small degree of understanding, it is because they are ignorant, and have not contracted a habit of reflection. I shall however add, that it is not for the interest of the lower part of mankind, that the great should be thus void of understanding.

Superiority of underſtanding principally depends, as I ſhall prove in the following diſcourſe, on a certain concourſe of circumſtances, wherein thoſe of the common claſs are rarely placed, and which it is almoſt impoſſible the great ſhould ever meet with. We ought therefore to judge the great with indulgence, and to be ſenſible that it is very uncommon to have a man of tolerable abilities in an important poſt.

Thus the public, eſpecially in times of calamity, is profuſe of elogiums. What praiſes were given to Varro for not deſpairing of the ſafety of the republic! In ſuch circumſtances as thoſe in which the Romans were then involved, a man of real merit is a God.

If Camillus had foreſeen the misfortunes to which he put a ſtop; if that hero, when choſen general at the battle of Allia, had there defeated the Gauls he conquered at the foot of the capitol; Camillus, like an hundred other captains, would not have acquired the title of the ſecond founder of Rome. If in times of proſperity, M. de Villars had fought in Italy the battle of Denain; and if he had otained that victory, at a time when France did not lie open to the enemy, the action would have been leſs important, the gratitude of the public leſs lively, and the general's glory not ſo great.

The concluſion of what I have ſaid is, that the public always judges according to the public intereſt; and if it has loſt ſight of this, it can form no idea of either probity or genius.

If the nations enſlaved by deſpotic power, are the contempt of other nations; if in the empires of Mogul and Morocco, we diſcover very few illuſtrious men; it is becauſe the mind, as I have already obſerved, being in itſelf neither great nor little, borrows either of theſe denominations from the grandeur or the ſmallneſs of the objects it contemplates. Now, in moſt arbitrary governments, the citizens cannot, without diſpleaſing a deſpotic prince, employ themſelves in the ſtudy of the law of nature, or in that of the public, moral, and political. They dare not aſcend to the firſt principles of thoſe ſciences, nor form grand ideas; they cannot therefore merit the title of great geniuſes. But if all the deciſions of the public are ſubject to the law of the public intereſt, we ought, it is ſaid, to find in this principle of the general intereſt, all the contradictions we, in this reſpect, imagine to be evident in the ideas of the public. For this propoſe, I ſhall purſue the parallel begun between the general and the author, and purpoſe this queſtion: If the military art is, of all others the moſt uſeful, why have there been ſo many generals, whoſe glory is more eclipſed in their life-time; and ſo many illuſtrious men of all kinds, whoſe memory and exploits are buried in the ſame tomb, when the glory of the authors and their contemporaries, is ſtill preſerved in its firſt ſtate? The anſwer to this queſtion is, that if we except the captains who have really improved the military art, as Pyrrhus, Hannibal, Guſtavus, Conde, and Turenne, who in this particular may be placed in the rank of models and inventors, all the generals who were of an inferior claſs to theſe, ceaſing at their death to be of ſervice to their country, have no longer a right to its acknowledgements, and conſequently to its eſteem. On the contrary, the authors, in ceaſing to live, do not ceaſe to be of uſe to the public; they have left in its hands the works that had already merited its eſteem. Now as the gratitude ought to ſubſiſt as long as the benefit, their glory cannot be eclipſed till the time comes, when their works will ceaſe to be of uſe to their country. It is then only to the different

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and unequal uſe the author and the general appear to be of to the public after their death, that we ought to attribute that ſucceſſive ſuperiority of glory, which at different times they by turns obtain over each other.

Hence we ſee the reaſon, why ſo many kings have been deified on the throne, and forgotten immediately after their death; why the names of illuſtrios writers who, when living, were ſo rarely mentioned with princes, are after their death, ſo often joined to thoſe of kings; why the name of Confucius is more known, and more reſpected in Europe, than that of any of the emperors of China; and why we place the names of Horace and Virgil by the ſide of that of Auguſtus.

If we apply to diſtance of place, what I here ſay of diſtance of time; if we demand, why the illuſtrious learned is leſs eſteemed by his own country, than an able miniſter; and for what reaſon a Roſny, who is more honoured amongſt us than a Deſcartes, is leſs eſteemed by the ſtranger? It is, I reply, becauſe a great miniſter is ſcarcely of any uſe but to his country: and that in improving the inſtruments proper for the cultivation of the arts and ſciences, in habituating the human mind to more order and juſtneſs, Deſcartes has rendered himſelf more uſeful to the world, and ought, conſequently to be more reſpected by it.

But, ſay they, if nations, in all their judgments, never conſult any thing but their own intereſts, why are the huſbandman and the vine-dreſſer, who are doubtleſs more uſeful than the poet and the geometrician, leſs eſteemed?

It is becauſe the public has a confuſed ſenſation that eſteem is in its hands an imaginary treaſure of no real value, without a wiſe and prudent diſtribution be made of it; that conſequently eſteem ought not to be attached to labours of which all men are capable: for eſteem, then, by becoming too common, would loſe, in a manner, all its virtue; it would no longer fertilize the ſeeds of genius and probity, placed in all minds, and would no longer produce thoſe illuſtrious men of all kinds, whom it animates to the purſuit of glory, by the difficulty of obtaining it. The public perceives then, that it is the art and not the artiſt, which ought to be honoured; and that if formerly the firſt who cultivated the earth, were deified under the names of Ceres and Bacchus, this honour, ſo juſtly granted to the inventors of agriculture, ought not to be laviſhed on labourers.

In all countries where the peaſant is not overloaded with taxes, the hope of gain, united to that of the harveſt, is ſufficient to engage him to cultivate the earth; and I conclude from it, that in certain caſes, as has been ſhew by the celebrated M. Duclos (b), it is the intereſt of nations to proportion their eſteem not only to the utility of an art, but alſo to its difficulty.

Who doubts but that a collection of facts, ſuch as that of the Bibliotheque Orientale, is not as inſtructive, as agreeable, and conſequently as uſeful, as an excellent tragedy? Why then has the public a greater eſteem for the tragic poet, than for the learned compiler? It is becauſe being convinced, by the great number of attempts, and the few who have ſucceeded, of the difficulty of dramatic poetry, the public is ſenſible, that to form ſuch geniuſes as thoſe

(b) See his excellent work entitled, "Conſiderations on the manners of the age."

of Corneille, Racine, Crebillon, and Voltaire, the ſucceſs ought to be attended with infinitely more glory; and that it is ſufficient that the compilers be honoured by a ſmaller ſhare of eſteem, in order to be abundantly ſupplied with thoſe works of which all men are capable, and which are properly only works of time and patience.

Among the learned, all thoſe who, deprived of the lights of philoſophy, only form into collections facts ſcattered in the ruins of antiquity, are, in relation to the man of genius, what the hewer of ſtones is to the architect; theſe are they who furniſh the materials for the edifice; and without them the architect would be uſeleſs. But few men can become good architects, and all men are capable of cutting ſtones; the intereſt of the public therefore requires, that the firſt ſhould be paid with an eſteem proportionable to the difficulty of their art. From the ſame motive, and becauſe a ſyſtematical and inventive genius is not commonly acquired without long and painful meditations, more eſteem is granted to this kind of genius, than to any other; and in ſhort, in all the kinds where the utility is nearly equal, the public always proportions its eſteems to the unequal difficulty of the ſeveral kinds.

I ſay, an utility nearly equal; becauſe, if it were poſſible to imagine a kind of abilities abſolutely uſeleſs, whatſoever difficulty there might be in excelling in it, the public would grant no eſteem to ſuch a talent: he who had acquired it would be treated as Alexander treated the man who, in his preſence, darted, it is ſaid, with wonderful addreſs, grains of millet-ſeed, through the eye of a needle, and obtained nothing from the equity of that prince, but a buſhel of millet-ſeed for his reward.

The contradiction that ſometimes ſeems obſervable between the intereſt and the judgment of the public, is then only apparent; and the public intereſt, as I had propoſed to prove, is therefore the ſole diſtributor of the eſteem granted to different kinds of genius.

CHAP. XIII.

Of probity in relation to various ages and nations.

IN all ages and nations, probity can be only an habit of performing actions that are of uſe to our country. However certain this propoſition may be, to render this truth the more evident, I ſhall endeavour to give a clear and full idea of this virtue.

To this purpoſe, I ſhall examine two ſentiments on this ſubject, that have hitherto divided the moraliſts.

Some maintain, that we have an idea of virtue abſolutely independent of different ages and governments; and that virtue is always one and the ſame. The others maintain, on the contrary, that every nation forms a different idea of it.

The firſt bring, in proof of their opinions, the ingenious, but unintelligible dreams of the Platoniſts. Virtue, according to them, is nothing but the idea of order, harmony, and eſſential beauty. But this beauty is a myſtery of which they can convey no fixed ideas: they therefore do not eſtabliſh their ſyſtem on the knowledge which hiſtory affords us of the human heart, and the powers of the mind.

The ſecond, and amongſt them Montaigne, with arms more ſtrangely tempered than thoſe of reaſoning, that is, with facts, attack the opinion of the firſt; prove that an action virtuous in the north, is vicious in the ſouth; and from thence conclude, that the idea of virtue is merely arbitrary.

Such are the opinions of theſe two ſects of philoſophers. Thoſe, from their not having conſulted hiſtory, err in a metaphyſical labyrinth of words: theſe, from their not having examined with ſufficient depth the facts preſented by hiſtory, have thought that caprice alone decided the goodneſs or turpitude of human actions. Theſe two philoſophical ſects are deceived; but they would both have eſcaped error, had they, with an attentive eye, conſidered the hiſtory of the world. They would then have perceived, that time muſt neceſſarily produce, in the phyſical and moral world, revolutions that change the face of empires; that in the great cataſtrophes of kingdoms, the people always experience great changes; that the ſame actions may ſucceſſively become uſeful and prejudicial, and conſequently, by turns aſſume the name of virtuous and vicious.

If, in conſequence of this obſervation, they would have been willing to form a mere abſtract idea of virtue, independent of practice, they would have acknowledged, that by the word Virtue can only be underſtood, a deſire of the general happineſs; that conſequently the public welfare is the object of virtue; and that the actions it enjoins, are the means it makes uſe of to accompliſh that end; that therefore, the idea of virtue is not arbitrary; that in different ages and countries, all men, at leaſt thoſe who live in ſociety, ought to form the ſame idea of it; and, in ſhort, if the people repreſent it under different forms, it is becauſe they take for virtue, the various means they employ to accompliſh the end.

This definition of virtue, I think, gives an idea of it that is at once clear, ſimple, and conformable to experience; a conformity that alone can eſtabliſh the truth of an opinion.

The pyramid of Venus-Urania, whoſe top was loſt in the clouds, and whoſe baſe was fixed on the earth, is the emblem of all ſyſtems, which crumble to pieces as faſt as they are built, if they are not founded on the ſteady baſis of facts and experience. It is therefore on facts, that is on the hitherto inexplicable folly and fantaſticalneſs of the various laws and cuſtoms, that I eſtabliſh the proof of my opinion.

However ſtupid we ſuppoſe mankind, it is certain, that enlightened by their own intereſt, they have not, without motives, adopted the ridiculous cuſtoms we find eſtabliſhed amongſt ſome of them; the fantaſticalneſs of theſe cuſtoms, proceed then from the diverſity of the intereſts of different nations; and in fact, if they have always, though confuſedly, underſtood by the word virtue, the deſire of the public happineſs; if they have conſequently given the name of honeſty only to actions uſeful to the nation; and if the idea of utility has always been ſecretly connected with the idea of virtue, we may aſſert, that the moſt ridicu-

lous, and even the moſt cruel cuſtoms, have always had for their foundation, as I am going to ſhew by ſome examples, either a real or apparent utility with reſpect to the public welfare.

Theft was permitted at Sparta; they only puniſhed the aukwardneſs of the thief who was ſurprized (a): could any thing be more abſurd than this cuſtom? However, if we call to mind the laws of Lycurgus, and the contempt ſhewn for gold and ſilver, in a country where the laws allowed the circulation of no other money than that of a kind of heavy brittle iron, it will appear that poultry and pulſe were almoſt the only things that could be ſtolen. Theſe thefts being always performed with addreſs, and frequently denied with firmneſs (b), they enured the Lacedemonians to a habit of courage and vigilance: the law then which allowed of ſtealing, might be very uſeful to that people, who had as much reaſon to be afraid of the treachery of the Ilotes, as of the ambition of the Perſians; and could only oppoſe againſt the attempts of the one, and the innumerable armies of the other, the bulwark of theſe two virtues. It is therefore certain, that theft, which is always prejudicial to a rich people, was of uſe to Sparta, and therefore properly honoured.

At the end of winter, when the ſcarcity of proviſions obliges the ſavage to quit his cabin, and hunger calls him to go to the chaſe, in ſearch of proviſions; ſome of the ſavage nations aſſemble before their departure, when making their old men mount the oaks, they ſhake the boughs with great violence, on which moſt of the old men falling, they are in a moment maſſacred. This fact is well known; and nothing can at firſt appear more abominable. However, what room for ſurprize is there, when, after having examined its origin, we find that the ſavage conſiders the fall of theſe unhappy old men, as a proof of their inability to ſuſtain the fatigues of hunting! Were they left in their cabins, or in the foreſts, they would fall a prey to hunger or the wild beaſts; they therefore, chuſe rather to preſerve them from the long duration, and the violence of pain; and by a ſpeedy and neceſſary paricide, ſave their fathers from a ſlow and cruel death. This is the principle on which ſo execrable a cuſtom is founded; that erratic people, whom hunting, and the neceſſity of procuring proviſions detains for ſix months together in immenſe foreſts, are thus, in a manner, neceſſitated to this barbarity; and in thoſe countries, paricide is inſpired and committed from the ſame principle of humanity, that makes us to look upon it with horror (c).

But

(a) Robbery is alſo honoured in the kingdom of Congo: but no theft is to be performed, nor any thing taken without the knowledge of the poſſeſſor of the thing ſtolen: every thing is to be taken by force. This cuſtom, ſay they, keeps up the courage of the people. On the contrary, among the Scythians, no crime was greater than that of robbery; and their manner of living required that it ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed: their flocks wandered here and there in the plains; with what eaſe might they then have been ſtolen; and what diſorders would the toleration of robbery have occaſioned? Therefore, ſays Ariſtotle, have they eſtabliſhed amongſt them this law, as the guardian of flocks.

(b) Every body knows the circumſtance related of the young Spartan, who rather than diſcover his theft, ſuffered, without crying out, his bowels to be devoured by a young fox, that he had ſtolen, and concealed under his robe.

(c) In the kingdom of Juida, in Africa, the people give no aſſiſtance to the ſick; they cure themſelves as well as they can, and when they

But without having recourſe to ſavage nations, let us caſt our eyes on polite countries, ſuch as China: if it be demanded, why an abſolute authority is there given to fathers, over the lives of their children, we find, that the lands of that empire, how extenſive ſoever they are, cannot ſometimes furniſh ſubſiſtance for the numerous inhabitants; now as the too great diſproportion between the multiplicity of men, and the fertility of the lands, would neceſſarily occaſion wars, fatal to that empire, and perhaps to the whole world, we ſee that in a time of famine, and to prevent an infinite number of murders and unneceſſary misfortunes, the Chineſe nation, humane in its intentions, but barbarous in the choice of the means, has, through a ſentiment of humanity, though a miſtaken one, conſidered the permiſſion to murder their infants, as neceſſary to the repoſe of the world. We ſacrifice, ſay they, for this purpoſe, ſome unfortunate victims, to whom infancy and ignorance conceal the knowledge and the horrors of death, in which perhaps conſiſts its moſt formidable terrors (d).

It is doubtleſs from the deſire of preventing the too great multiplication of the human ſpecies, and conſequently from the ſame origin, that certain nations in Africa ſtill preſerve a ridiculous veneration for anchorets, who deny themſelves that commerce with women, which they allow themſelves with the brutes.

It was equally a motive of public intereſt, and the deſire of protecting modeſt beauty againſt the attempts of incontinence, that formerly engaged the Swiſs to publiſh an edict, by which it was not only permitted, but even ordained, that each prieſt ſhould provide himſelf a concubine (e).

On the coaſt of Coromandel, where the women freed themſelves by poiſon from the troubleſome yoke of marriage, this was at length the motive which, by a remedy as odious as the evil, engaged the legiſlature to provide for the ſafety of huſbands, by forcing the women to burn themſelves on their huſband's pile (f).

In conformity with my reaſonings, all the facts I have juſt cited, concur to prove, that the cuſtoms, even the moſt fooliſh and the moſt cruel, have always their ſource in the real, or apparent utility of the public.

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they are recovered, live in the ſame cordiality with thoſe who had thus abandoned them.

The inhabitants of Congo, kill thoſe whom they imagine paſt recovery, to ſhorten their pains and agonies.

In the iſle of Formoſa, when a man is dangerouſly ill, they put a ſlip knot about his neck, and ſtrangle him, to ſave him from the pain of a lingering death.

(d) The manner of diſpatching girls in catholic countries, is forcing them to take the veil, and many thus paſs an unhappy life, a prey to deſpair: perhaps our cuſtom, in this reſpect, is more barbarous than that of the Chineſe.

(e) Zeuinglius, in writing to the Swiſs Cantons, repeats the edict made by their anceſtors, that enjoined every prieſt to have his concubine for fear he ſhould attempt his neighbour's chaſtity. See Father Paul's hiſtory of the council of Trent, book I.

It is ſaid, in the ſeventeenth canon of the council of Toledo, that "he who is con-"tented with one woman, by the title of "wife or concubine, according to his choice, "ſhall not be debared from the communion." The church then probably tolerated concubinage, to ſecure the married women from inſult.

(f) The women of Mezurado are burnt with the bodies of their huſbands. They themſelves demand the honour of being led to the pile; but at the ſame time uſe all their endeavours to prevent it.

But

But it is ſaid, that theſe cuſtoms are not, on this account, the leſs odious or ridiculous. 'Tis true; but it is only becauſe we are ignorant of the motives of their eſtabliſhment; and becauſe theſe cuſtoms, conſecrated by antiquity and ſuperſtition, ſubſiſted here, by negligence, or the weakneſs of government, long after the cauſes of their eſtabliſhment were removed.

When France was, in a manner, only a vaſt foreſt, who doubts that thoſe donations of uncultivated lands made to the religious orders, ought then to have been permitted: and that the prolongation of ſuch a permiſſion would not now be as abſurd and injurious to the ſtate, as it might be wiſe and uſeful, when France was uncultivated? All the cuſtoms that procure only tranſient advantages, are like ſcaffolds, that ſhould be pulled down, when the palaces are raiſed.

Nothing could be a greater proof of wiſdom in the founder of the empire of the Incas, than his repreſenting to the Peruvians that he was the offspring of the ſun; and had brought them the laws dictated to him by the god his father. This falſhood impreſſed on the minds of the ſavages an higher reſpect for the laws of that legiſlator: this falſhood was therefore of ſuch uſe to the riſing ſtate, as to deſerve to be conſidered as virtuous; but after having eſtabliſhed the foundations of a good legiſlation; after being aſſured, by the form of the government itſelf, of the exactneſs with which the laws would be always obſerved, this legiſlator ought to have become leſs proud, or ſtill more judicious; he ſhould have foreſeen the revolutions that might have happened in the manners and intereſts of his people, and the changes that, in conſequence of them, ought to be made in the laws; he ſhould therefore have declared to the people, by himſelf or his ſucceſſor, that he had made uſe of a neceſſary falſhood only to render them happy; by which confeſſion he would have ſtripped the laws of the marks of divinity, which rendered them ſacred and inviolable, which would have oppoſed all reformation, and might at laſt have rendered them prejudicial to the ſtate, if by the landing of the Europeans, that empire had not been deſtroyed, almoſt as ſoon as it had been formed.

The intereſt of ſtates, like all human things, is ſubject to a thouſand revolutions. The ſame laws and the ſame cuſtoms become ſucceſſively uſeful and prejudicial to the ſame people; whence I conclude, that theſe laws ought by turns to be adopted and rejected, and that the ſame actions ought ſucceſſively to bear the names of virtuous and vicious; a propoſition that cannot be denied without confeſſing, that there are actions, which at one and the ſame time, are virtuous and prejudicial to the ſtate, and conſequently without ſapping the foundations of all government, and all ſociety.

The general concluſion of all I have juſt ſaid is, that virtue is only the deſire of the happineſs of mankind; and that probity, which I conſider as virtue put into action, is among all people, and in all the various governments of the world, only the habit of performing actions uſeful to our country (g).

(g) I believe it is not neceſſary to obſerve, that I treat only of Political, and not of Religious Probity, which propoſes other ends, preſcribes duties of a different nature, and has a relation to more ſublime objects.

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However evident this concluſion may be, as there is no nation that does not know, and confound together two different kinds of virtue, the one what I ſhall call Prejudicial Virtue, and the other, True Virtue; I believe, that in order to render nothing more to be deſired on this ſubject, I ought to examine the nature of theſe different kinds of virtue.

CHAP. XIV.

Of virtues prejudicial and true.

I Give the name of Prejudicial Virtues to all thoſe where an exact obſervance of them does not in the leaſt contribute to the public happineſs, ſuch as the auſterities of thoſe ſenſeleſs Fakirs with which the Indies are peopled; virtues that being often indifferent, and even prejudicial to the ſtate, are the puniſhment of thoſe who make vows for the performance of them. Theſe falſe virtues are in moſt nations more honoured than the true virtues, and thoſe that practiſe them held in greater veneration than good citizens.

No body is more honoured at Indoſtan than the Bramins (a): the people adore even their nudities (b): and pay the greateſt reſpect to their penances; which are really frightful (c): ſome remain all their lives tied to a tree; others hang ſcorching over a fire; ſome are loaded with heavy chains; others take no nouriſhment but mere liquids; ſome ſhut up their mouths with a padlock, and others faſten to it a little bell; and it is an honour to parents, to proſtitute their daughters to the Fakirs.

Among the actions or cuſtoms, to which ſuperſtition has united the name of ſacred, one of the moſt pleaſant is undoubtedly that of Juibus's prieſteſſes, of the iſland of Formoſa. "To officiate worthily, and to merit the vene-
"ration of the people, they ought after the ſermons, contorſions, and howl-
"ings are ended, to cry out, that they ſee their gods; this being done,
"they roll on the earth, mount to the roof of the pagod, diſcover their
"nakedneſs, ſlap their poſteriors, ſcatter about their urine, come down
"naked, and then waſh in the preſence of the aſſembly (d).

(a) The Bramins have the excluſive privilege of begging alms: they exhort the people to give them, and give none themſelves.

(b) Why, when we are men, ſay theſe Bramins, ſhould we be aſhamed of going naked, when we came naked and without ſhame, out of our mother's womb?

The Cirabees are no leſs aſhamed of being ſeen cloathed, than we of being caught naked. If moſt ſavages cover certain parts of their bodies; it is leſs on account of their modeſty, than from the tenderneſs and ſenſibility of certain parts, and the fear of wounding them in traverſing the woods and thickets.

(c) In the kingdom of Pegu are a kind of anchorets named Santons; they never beg for any thing, though dying with hunger. Indeed care is taken to anticipate all their deſires. Whoever confeſſes to them cannot be puniſhed, whatever crime he may have committed. The Santons lodge in the country, and dwell in the trunks of hollow trees: after their death they are honoured as Gods.

(d) "Voyages of the Dutch Eaſt-India-company."

Happy the people among whom the prejudicial virtues are only ridiculous; they are frequently extremely barbarous (e). In the capital of Cochin, they bring up crocodiles; and whoever expoſes himſelf to the fury of one of theſe animals, and is devoured, is reckoned among the elect. In the kingdom of Martemban, it is an act of virtue, on the day when the idol is brought out, for the people to throw themſelves under the wheels of his chariot, or to cut their throats as he paſſes by; and whoever offers himſelf to this death, is reputed a ſaint, and his name is on that account regiſtered in a book.

As there are prejudicial virtues, there are alſo crimes of prejudice. It is one for a Bramin, to marry a virgin. If during the three months in which the people, of the iſland of Formoſa, are ordered to go naked, a man faſtens upon him the ſmalleſt piece of linen, he wears, ſay they, a cloathing unworthy of a man. In the ſame iſland, it is a crime for a woman with child to be brought to bed, before the thirty-fifth year of her age. Are they pregnant, they extend themſelves at the foot of the prieſteſs, who, in execution of the law, tramples upon them, till ſhe cauſes a miſcarriage.

When the prieſts or magicians of Pegu have foretold the recovery or death of the ſick (f), it is a crime for the ſick perſon condemned to recover. While he is on his recovery, every one flies from, and abuſes him. If he had been good, ſay the prieſts, God would have received him into his company.

There is perhaps, no country where the people have not a greater abhorrence for ſome of theſe crimes of prejudice, than for villanies the moſt attrocious, and the moſt injurious to ſociety.

Among the Giagues, a people who devour their conquered enemies, they are allowed, ſays father Cavazi, to pound their children in a mortar, with roots, oil, and leaves; to boil them, and form the whole into a paſte, with which they rub their bodies, to render them invulnerable; it would be an abominable ſacrilege not to maſſacre with the blows of a ſpade, a young man and woman in the month of March, before the queen of the country. When

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(e) The women of Madagaſcar believe that there are fortunate and unfortunate days and hours; and it is a duty of their religion, when any of them are delivered in an unfortunate day or hour, to expoſe the infants to be devoured by the wild beaſts, to bury them alive, or to ſtrangle them.

In one of the temples in the empire of Pegu, they educate their virgins. Every year at the feſtival of the idol, they ſacrifice one of theſe unhappy creatures. The prieſt in his ſacerdotal habits, ſtrips her naked, ſtrangles her, plucks out her heart, and throws it in the idol's face. The ſacrifice being ended, the prieſt dines, dreſſes himſelf in a habit of a horrible form, and dances before the people. In other temples in the ſame country, men only are ſacrificed. For this purpoſe they buy a handſome well made ſlave. This ſlave is dreſſed in a white robe, and being waſhed three ſucceſſive mornings, is at length ſhewn to the people. The fourth day the prieſt opens his breaſt, plucks out his heart, ſprinkles the idol with his blood, and eats his fleſh as ſacred food. "Innocent blood, "ſay the prieſts, ought to flow to expiate "the ſins of the nation; beſides, it is neceſ-"ſary that ſome ſhould go to the great "God, to put him in mind of his people." It is however, proper to remark, that the prieſts never charge themſelves with this commiſſion.

(f) A Giague, after his death, is aſked, why he left this life? When a prieſt counterfeiting the voice of the deceaſed, anſwers, that he has not made a ſufficient number of ſacrifices to his anceſtors. Theſe ſacrifices are a conſiderable part of the revenues of the prieſts.

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the corn is ripe, the queen, ſurrounded by her courtiers, leaves the palace, and cutting the throats of thoſe ſhe finds in her way, gives them her retinue to eat. Theſe ſacrifices, ſhe pretends, are neceſſary to appeaſe the ghoſts of her anceſtors, who ſee with regret, the common people enjoy a life of which they are deprived; this poor conſolation they imagine may be ſufficient to prevail on them to bleſs the harveſt.

In the kingdoms of Congo, Angola, and Matamba, the huſband may without diſgrace ſell his wife; the father his ſon; and the ſon his father: in theſe countries, they know only one crime (g), that of refuſing the firſt fruits of the harveſt to the Chitombe, who is the high prieſt of the nation. Theſe people, ſays father Labat, ſo deſtitute of all true virtue, are very ſcrupulous obſervers of this cuſtom. A perſon ſolely employed in the augmentation of his revenues has the beſt title with them to be the Chitombe: he has not the leaſt deſire to inſtruct the ignorant; he is even afraid leſt too juſt an idea of virtue ſhould diminiſh their ſuperſtition, and the tribute they pay him.

What I have ſaid of prejudicial virtues, and vicious prejudices, is ſufficient to ſhew the difference between thoſe virtues and true virtue; that is with thoſe which inceſſantly add to the public felicity, and without which ſociety could not ſubſiſt.

In conſequence of theſe two different kinds of virtue, I ſhall diſtinguiſh two different kinds of the corruption of manners; Religious and Political Corruption (h). But before I enter into this diſcuſſion, I declare that I write in the character of a philoſopher and not of a divine; and therefore in this and the following chapters, I ſhall not pretend to treat of any other virtues but thoſe that are merely human. This information being given, I enter upon the ſubject, and ſay, that with reſpect to corruption of manners, the name of religious corruption is given to all kinds of libertiniſm, and principally to that of men with women. This ſpecies of corruption, for which I am not an advocate, and which is doubtleſs criminal, ſince it is offenſive to God, is not however incompatible with the happineſs of a nation. The people of different countries have believed, and believe ſtill, that this corruption is not criminal: but it is doubtleſs ſo in France, ſince it is contrary to the laws of the country; but it would not be ſo if women were in common, and their offſpring declared the children of the ſtate: this crime would then, in a political view, be attended with no danger. In fact, if we take a ſurvey of the earth,

(g) In the kingdom of Lao, the Talapoins, who are the prieſts of the country, can only be judged by the king himſelf. They go to confeſſion every month; and, being faithful obſervers of that cuſtom, may commit a thouſand abominations with impunity. They ſo far blind their princes, that a Talopoin convicted of uſing falſe money, was ſent back acquitted by the king; who, only replied, that the ſeculars ought to make him greater preſents. The moſt conſiderable perſons in the country think it a great honour to perform the meaneſt offices for the Talopoins, and none of them will wear a habit that has not been for ſome time worn by a Talopoin.

(h) This diſtinction is neceſſary, firſt, becauſe I conſider probity in a philoſophical light, and independently of the obligations of religion with reſpect to ſociety, which I beg the reader to keep in view, through the whole courſe of this work; and ſecondly, to avoid the perpetual confuſion found among idolatrous nations between the principles of religion, and thoſe of a political and moral nature.

we ſhall ſee different nations of people among whom what we call libertiniſm is not only conſidered as no corruption of manners, but is found authorized by the laws, and even conſecrated by religion.

Without reckoning the ſeraglios in the Eaſt, which are under the protection of the laws; at Tonquin, where fruitfulneſs is honoured, the pain impoſed by the law on barren women, is to ſearch for agreeable girls, and to bring them to their huſbands. In conſequence of this political inſtitution, the Tonquineſe think the Europeans ridiculous in having only one wife; and cannot conceive why among us, rational Beings can think of honouring God, by a vow of chaſtity. They maintain that when there is an opportunity, it is as criminal not to give life to what has it not, as to take it from thoſe who already have it (i).

It is alſo under the protection of the laws, that the Siameſe women, with their boſoms and thighs half naked, are carried into the ſtreets in palanquins, where they ſhew themſelves in the moſt laſcivious attitudes. This law was eſtabliſhed by one of their queens named Tirada, who, in order to diſguſt the men againſt a more ſhameful paſſion, thought herſelf obliged to uſe all the power of beauty. This project, ſay the Siameſe, ſucceeded; they add, that it is beſides a wiſe law, ſince it is agreeable to the men to have deſires, and to the women to excite them. Thus it is the happineſs of both ſexes, and the only bleſſing heaven has mingled with the evils by which we are afflicted, and what ſoul can be ſo barbarous as to deſire to deprive us of it (k)?

In the kingdom of Batimena (l), every woman, of what condition ſoever, is obliged by the law, upon pain of death, to yield to the embraces of whoever deſires it: a refuſal is a ſentence of death.

I ſhould never have done, were I to endeavour to give a liſt of all the nations that have not the ſame ideas as we, of this kind of corruption of manners: I ſhall content myſelf then, after having mentioned ſome of the countries where libertiniſm is authorized by law, to cite ſome of thoſe where the ſame libertiniſm forms a part of religious worſhip.

In the iſland of Formoſa, drunkenneſs and lewdneſs are acts of religion. Delights, ſay thoſe people, are the daughters of heaven, the gifts of its goodneſs; to enjoy them is to honour the Deity; it is anſwering his kindneſs. Can it be queſtioned, that the ſight of the careſſes and enjoyments of love is not pleaſing to the Gods? The Gods are good, and there is no offering of our

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(i) Among the Giagues, when a girl has the ſigns of her being capable of bearing children, they make a feaſt: but when theſe ſigns diſappear, they put thoſe women to death, as unworthy of life, when they can no longer communicate it.

(k) A very ſenſible writer ſays on this ſubject, it is beyond contradiction, that all pleaſures contrary to the general good ought to be prohibited; but before this prohibition, it is proper, that by a thouſand efforts of the mind, endeavours be uſed to reconcile this pleaſure with the general happineſs. "Men, he adds, are ſo unhappy, that one "pleaſure more is well worth the pains of an "attempt to ſeparate from this whatever "may be dangerous with reſpect to ſociety; "and perhaps it might be eaſy to ſucceed, "were we with this view to examine the "laws of thoſe countries where theſe plea-"ſures are permitted."

(l) "Chriſtianity in the Indies, book iv. page 308."

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gratitude more acceptable to them than our pleaſures; and in conſequence of this reaſoning, they publicly give themſelves up to every kind of proſtitution (m).

It is alſo, in order to obtain the favour of the Gods, that the queen of the Giagues, before declaring war, orders the moſt beautiful women, and the handſomeſt of her warriors, to appear before her; where, in different attitudes, they enjoy the pleaſures of love. In how many countries, ſays Cicero, are temples erected to debauchery? how many altars have been raiſed to proſtituted women (n)? Beſides the antient worſhip of Venus, do not the Banians, under the name of the goddeſs Banani, adore one of their queens, who, according to Gamelli Carreri, "expoſed all her beauties to the ſight of her whole court, and ſucceſſively laviſhed her favours to ſeveral lovers, and even to two at the ſame time?"

I ſhall cloſe my quotations on this head, with a paſſage from Julius Firmicus Maternus, a father of the ſecond century, in his treatiſe de errore profanarum religionum. "Aſſyria, together with a part of Africa, ſays this "father, worſhip the air by the name of Juno, or the virgin Venus. This "goddeſs preſides over the elements: ſhe has her temples, where prieſts offi- "ciate dreſſed and painted like women; they perform their devotions in "languid, effeminate accents; provoke men's deſires, gratify them, and glory "in their lewdneſs; and after theſe preparatory pleaſures, call on the god- "deſs with vehement vociferations, and inſtrumental muſic, pretending to be "under a divine inſpiration, and to utter prophecies."

Thus there are many countries where that corruption of manners, which I call religious, is authoriſed by the laws; or conſecrated by the religion.

What innumerable evils, will it be ſaid, are annexed to this kind of corruption? May it not be anſwered, that diſſoluteneſs is then only politically dangerous in a ſtate, when it countervenes the law of the country, or is blended with ſome other defect of the government. It is in vain to add, that the nations where ſuch diſſoluteneſs prevails are the contempt of the whole world. But without mentioning the eaſtern nations and others, either ſavage or mar-

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(m) In the kingdom of Thibet, the young women wear about their necks the gifts of lewdneſs; that is, the rings of their gallants: and the more they have, with the greater ſplendor and rejoicings are their nuptials celebrated.

(n) At Babylon, all the women were to encamp near the temple of Venus, and once in their life, by an expiatory proſtitution, obtain the remiſſion of their ſins: they were not to deny the deſire of the firſt ſtranger, who was for purifying their ſoul, by the enjoyment of their bodies. The pretty and handſome had doubtleſs ſoon diſcharged their penance; but they, who nature had not favoured with an inviting perſon, may be generally ſuppoſed to have waited a long time, till ſome charitable ſtranger had reſtored them to a ſtate of peace.

The convents of the Bonzes are full of idolatrous nuns as concubines. When tired of them, they are diſmiſſed and replaced by others; the gates of theſe convents are crowded by votaries, and it is generally by preſents to the Bonzes, that they obtain the high favour of being admitted. In the kingdom of Cochin, the Bramins being deſirous of giving the firſt taſte of the joys of love to brides, make both the ſovereign and people tell them this holy work is to be committed to them: wherever they go, fathers leave them with their daughters, as huſbands do with their wives.

tial, who, though given up to voluptuouſneſs of every kind, are happy at home, and formidable abroad; what nation ever excelled the Greeks! a people which to this day is the admiration and honour of human nature? Before the Peleponeſian war, an æra fatal to their virtue, what nation, what country produced ſo many virtuous and great men? Yet, the taſte of the Greeks, for the moſt indecent love is well known: ſo general was it that Ariſtides, ſurnamed the Juſt, that Ariſtides, with whoſe praiſes, ſaid the Athenians, our ears are perpetually filled, loved Themiſtocles. It was the beauty of the young Steſileus, which kindling violent deſires in the heart of both, at the ſame time inflamed it with implacable hatred againſt each other. Plato was ſenſual; Socrates himſelf, whom the oracle of Apollo declared to be the wiſeſt of men, beſides having two wives, and frequenting courteſans, loved Alcibiades and Archelaus. Thus it is certain, that according to our idea of morality, the moſt virtuous of the Greeks would have been looked upon in Europe as debauchees. Now this kind of corruption of manners was in Greece carried to the utmoſt exceſs, when at the ſame time this country produced ſuch great men of every kind, that it made Perſia tremble; conſequently, that corruption of manners which I call religious does not ſeem incompatible with the greatneſs and felicity of a ſtate.

There is another kind of corruption of manners, which is preparative of the fall of an empire, and preſages its ruin; this I ſhall diſtinguiſh by the name of political corruption. With this a people is infected when the bulk of the individuals ſeparate their intereſt from that of the public. This kind of corruption, which ſometimes is blended with the preceding, has led many moraliſts to confound them: if the queſtion be only of the political intereſt of a ſtate, the latter would perhaps be the moſt dangerous. A people, however pure its firſt manners might have been, when this corruption gets footing, muſt neceſſarily be unhappy at home, and little feared abroad: the duration of ſuch an empire is precarious; it is chance which either delays or haſtens the fall of it.

To evince how dangerous this anarchy of the ſeveral intereſts is in a ſtate, let us conſider the evils ariſing only from the oppoſition of the intereſts of one body to thoſe of the common-wealth. We will allow the Bonzes, the Talopoins, all the virtues of ourſelves: yet, if the intereſts of the body of the Bonzes be not connected with the public intereſt; if, for inſtance, the Bonzes authority depends on the people's blindneſs, the Bonze will neceſſarily be an enemy to the nation which maintains him; will be to that nation what the Romans were to the world, honeſt among themſelves, robbers with regard to the univerſe. Were every Bonze in himſelf greatly averſe to dignities, and high ſtations, the body will not be the leſs ambitious; all its members will labour for its aggrandizement often without knowing it: they will even think themſelves authoriſed ſo to do from a principle of virtue (o); therefore in a ſtate there is nothing more dangerous than a body whoſe intereſt is not connected with the general intereſt.

(o) In the true religion, prieſts have been found, who, in the times of ignorance have abuſed the devotion of the people for arrogating to themſelves the rights of ſovereignty.

If the Pagan prieſts cauſed Socrates to be put to death, and were ever oppoſing eminent perſons, it was owing to the oppoſition of their private intereſt to that of the public; it was becauſe the prieſts of a falſe religion, find their account in keeping the people in blindneſs, and for this purpoſe perſecute and remove out of the way all who may open their eyes: an example which has ſometimes been copied by the miniſters of the true religion, who, without the ſame neceſſity, have practiſed the ſame cruelties, have perſecuted, have oppreſſed great men; have laviſhed their panegyrics on works of little merit, and have virulently criticiſed others very excellent; but in both have been diſowned by more candid or more knowing divines (p).

For inſtance, can there be any thing more ridiculous than the prohibition in ſome countries againſt bringing into it a ſingle copy of the Spirit of Laws? a work which more than one prince, takes care that his ſon ſhall read over and over. May we not here uſe the expreſſion of a man of wit, that the monks, in ſoliciting this prohibition, acted as the Scythians did with their ſlaves, putting out their eyes that they might turn the mill with leſs diſtraction.

Thus it is clear, that the public happineſs, or calamity, depends ſolely on the agreement or oppoſition of the intereſt of individuals with the general intereſt; and that the religious corruption of manners may, as hiſtory abundantly proves, be often joined with magnanimity, elevation of ſoul, wiſdom, abilities, in fine, with all the qualities which form great men.

That citizens, infected with this kind of corruption of manners, have often rendered more important ſervices to their country than the moſt auſtere anchorites, is undeniable; how happy have been the conſequences of the amorous Circaſſian's care, either for her own or her daughter's beauty, who firſt ven-

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(p) Father Millot, in a diſcourſe which obtained the prize of the academy at Dijon, on the queſtion, "Whether it is moſt uſeful to ſtudy men or books?" expreſſes himſelf in the following manner, concerning M. de Monteſquieu. "Thoſe rules of conduct, "thoſe maxims of government, which ſhould "be engraved on the thrones of kings, and "on the hearts of every one inveſted with au-"thority; is it not to a cloſe ſtudy of men that "we owe them? Witneſs that illuſtrious pa-"triot that interpreter, that judge of the "laws, on whoſe tomb France and all Eu-"rope ſhed tears; but whoſe genius will ever "be ſeen to inſtruct nations, tracing the "plan of public happineſs; that immortal "writer, who abridged every thing, be-"cauſe he ſaw every thing, who was for "putting us on thinking, as what we ſtand "more in need of than reading. With what "ſagacity had he ſtudied human nature? "Travelling like Solon, meditating like "Pythagoras, converſing like Plato, read-"ing like Cicero, writing like Tacitus, his "continual object was man; men he ſtudied, "and knew them. The fertile ſeeds al-"ready are ſeen to germinate, which he "caſt into the minds of the chiefs of nations, "and the rulers of empires. Let us gratefully "reap the fruits, &c." Father Millot adds in a note "When an author of confeſſed pro-"bity, a free-thinker, who, always expreſ-"ſing himſelf as he imagines, formally ſays, "Chriſtianity, the ſole view of which ſeems to "be the happineſs of the other life, alſo con-"ſtitutes our happineſs in this," and after refuting a dangerous paradox of Bayle, he adds, "The principles of chriſtianity, well engraved "in the heart, would be infinitely ſtronger "than this falſe honour of monarchies, theſe "human virtues of republics, and this ſer-"vile fear of deſpotic ſtates, which is ſtronger "than the three principles of political go-"vernment, laid down in the Spirit of Laws: "can ſuch an author, by any one who has "read his work, be accuſed of deſigning to "ſtrike at Chriſtianity?"

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tured on innoculation? what numbers of children have by this method been ſaved from an early death? Poſſibly there is not a foundreſs of any order of nuns to whom the world owes ſuch an extenſive and important benefit, and who conſequently is entitled to ſo much of its acknowledgment.

Let me be allowed once more, for a concluſion of this chapter, to declare, that it has by no means been my intention to vindicate debauchery. All I meant was only to impart clear ideas of theſe two different kinds of corruption of manners, which have been too often confounded, and the general ideas of which ſeemed to have been dark and perplexed; becauſe, on a more explicit information of the true ſcope of the queſtion, the importance of it may be better known, the degree of contempt aſſignable to theſe two different ſorts of corruption may be better determined, and we ſhall better perceive that there are two different ſpecies of bad actions; ſome vicious in every form of government, others which in a ſtate are pernicious, and conſequently criminal, only as thoſe actions are contradictory to the laws of thoſe countries.

Moraliſts, by a clearer inſight into the evil, will naturally acquire a greater ſkill in the cure. They may now view morality in a new point of light, and, from a vain ſcience, improve it to a ſcience of univerſal utility.

CHAP. XV.

Of the uſe accruing to morality, from the knowledge of the principles laid down in the preceding chapters.

IF morality hitherto has little contributed to the happineſs of mankind, it is not owing to any want of perſpicuity or beauty of ſtile, or propriety and loftineſs of ſentiment in the moraliſts: but amidſt all their ſuperior talents, it muſt be owned, that they have not often enough conſidered the different vices of nations as neceſſarily reſulting from the different form of their government; yet, it is only by conſidering morality in this point of light, that it can become of any real uſe to men. What have hitherto been the effects of all the ſplendid maxims of morality? If ſome individuals have been corrected by them of faults which perhaps they reproached themſelves with, no change in the manners of nations have been produced. What is this to be imputed to? It is becauſe, the vices of a people, if I may preſume to ſay ſo, always lie at the bottom of its legiſlation. There he muſt ſearch, who would pluck up the root whence its vices ariſe. He who wants either penetration, or courage, for ſuch an undertaking, is in this reſpect of little or no uſe to the univerſe. To attempt extinguiſhing the vices annexed to the legiſlation of a people, without making any change in this legiſlation, is no leſs than rejecting the juſt conſequence after admitting the principles.

What can be hoped for from ſo many declamations againſt the falſity of women, if this vice be the neceſſary effect of an oppoſition betwixt the deſires of nature, and the ſentiments which by the law of decency women are

forced to affect? In Malabar and Madagaſcar, all women are faithful, becauſe they have gallants without number, and they never pitch on a huſband till after repeated trials; it is the ſame with the ſavages of New Orleans, and of thoſe people where the relations of the Great Sun, the princeſs of the blood may, on any diſguſt taken at their huſbands, diſmiſs them and marry others. In ſuch countries, no unfaithful wives are heard of, becauſe they have no manner of intereſt to be ſo.

Very far am I from inferring, that from theſe examples the ſame manners ſhould be introduced among us; I only ſay, that women cannot reaſonably be reproached with a breach of faith which decency and the laws, as it were, impoſed on them as a neceſſity; and that whilſt the cauſes are ſuffered to ſubſiſt, the effects will continue.

For a ſecond inſtance, we ſhall take defamation. This is a vice, but a neceſſary vice, becauſe in every country where the people have no ſhare in the adminiſtration of public affairs, and being thus little concerned about mental improvement, muſt ſtagnate in a ſcandalous ſloth. Now, if in this country it be the faſhion to contract a numerous acquaintance, and to frequent public places, and loquacity is accounted the mark of breeding and ſpirit; he who is ignorant, and not able to diſcourſe of things, muſt neceſſarily make perſons the ſubject of his talk: and panegyric being inſupportable, and ſatire entertaining, the ignorant, to avoid being inſupportable, are obliged to talk ſcandal: thus this vice cannot be ſuppreſſed without aboliſhing the productive cauſe, without delivering the citizens from idleneſs, and conſequently without altering the form of government. Why is the man of ſenſe generally leſs a buſy body in private companies than the man of faſhion? It is becauſe the former, taken up with greater objects, ſpeaks of perſons, only as they have, like great men, an immediate relation with great things; likewiſe the man of ſenſe, as he never defames but by way of revenge, it is very rarely he defames; whereas the man of the world muſt either defame or be mute.

What I ſay of defaming, I likewiſe ſay of debauchery, againſt which the moraliſts have always ſo violently inveighed: debauchery is ſo generally allowed to be a neceſſary conſequence of luxury, that any farther proof of it would be ſuperfluous. Now, if luxury, which I am very far from thinking, but which is commonly believed, be very uſeful to the ſtate; if, as may be eaſily ſhewn, the taſte for it cannot be extinguiſhed, and citizens brought to the obſervance of ſumptuary laws, without altering the form of government, then ſome alterations of this kind muſt take place, antecedently to any hopes of aboliſhing debauchery. Every harrangue on this head is good divinity, but not policy; the object of policy and legiſlation is the opulency, power, and happineſs of a people: now with regard to this, I ſay, that if luxury be really uſeful to France, it would be ridiculous to attempt to introduce there an auſterity of manners incompatible with a taſte for luxury. There is no proportion between the advantages which commerce and luxury procure to a ſtate in its preſent conſtitution, (advantages which to ſuppreſs debauchery it muſt forego) and the infinitely ſmall evil occaſioned by the love of women. This is to complain of finding in a rich mine ſome ſparks of copper intermixed with veins of gold. Wherever luxury is neceſſary, it is a ſoleciſm in politics to account intriguing a moral vice; and if it muſt be called a moral vice, the conſequence

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is that, in ſome countries and ſome ages, there are uſeful vices; and that it is to the mud of the Nile Egypt owes its fertility. In effect, on a political examination of the behaviour of intriguing women, it will be found that, though in certain reſpects blameable, they are, in others of great uſe to the public; that for inſtance, in the uſe they make of their money, they are more advantageous to the ſtate than the moſt virtuous of their ſex. By the deſire of pleaſing, which ſends an intriguing woman to the mercer and milliner, ſhe not only ſaves an infinite number of workmen from the indigence into which ſumptuary laws at once would plunge them, but the ſame deſire puts her upon acts of the moſt judicious charity. If luxury be ſuppoſed uſeful to a nation, is it not the women of dreſs, who by exciting the induſtry of the artiſts of luxury, continually improve their uſefulneſs to the ſtate? Virtuous women therefore are not ſo well adviſed by their directors in beſtowing on beggars and criminals, as intriguing women by the deſire of pleaſing. Theſe ſupport uſeful members of ſociety: the others nuiſances, even the enemies of mankind.

From what I have ſaid it follows, that no change in the ideas of a people is to be hoped for, till after a change in its legiſlation; that the reformation of manners is to be begun by the reformation of laws; and declamations againſt a vice uſeful in the preſent form of government, would politically be detrimental, were they not found fruitleſs. But ſo they will always be, for it is only the force of the laws that can ever act on the bulk of a nation. Beſides, let me be allowed curſorily to obſerve, that among the moraliſts, there are very few who, by ſetting our paſſions at variance, know how to avail themſelves of them, ſo as to procure their opinions to be adopted. Moſt of their admonitions are too dogmatical, and imperious; yet they ſhould be ſenſible, that invectives will never prevail againſt ſentiments: that it is only a paſſion which can get the better of a paſſion; for inſtance, to bring a gay woman to more reſerve and modeſty in public, her vanity muſt be contraſted with her coquetry, and it muſt be urged to her, that modeſty is an invention of love and of refined delight (a); that it is to the gawſe which covers a woman's beauties,

(a) It is by conſidering modeſty in this light, that we may anſwer the arguments of the Stoics and Cynics, who affirmed, that the virtuous man did nothing in private which he ſhould not do in public, and who conſequently believed that they might publicly act the pleaſures of love. If moſt legiſlators have cenſured theſe Cynical principles, and claſſed modeſty among the virtues, it is will it be anſwered, becauſe they apprehended, that the frequent ſight of enjoyment might caſt ſome diſguſt on a pleaſure, on which depends the converſation of the ſpecies, and the continuance of the world? They were likewiſe aware, that dreſs concealing ſome female charms, decked a woman with all the beauties which a lively imagination could ſuggeſt; that this dreſs inflamed curioſity; heightened the joys of female careſſes; rendered their favours more extatic, and multiplied the delights of our afflictive ſtate. If Lycurgus had baniſhed from Sparta a certain kind of modeſty; and if the young women, in preſence of a whole people, wreſtled naked with the youth of the other ſex; the legiſlator's intention herein was, that being made ſtronger by ſuch exerciſe, their children might be more robuſt and fitter for the conſtitution of that ſtate, which was purely military. He knew that however the cuſtom of ſeeing naked women might cool the deſire of ſeeing their hidden beauties, the deſire itſelf was unextinguiſhable, eſpecially in a country where it was only in ſecret and by ſtealth, that huſbands were admitted to the embraces of their wives. Beſides, Lycurgus, as he made love one of the principal ſprings of his legiſlative ſyſtem, intended it for the recompence, and not the occupation of the Spartans.

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that the world owes moſt of its pleaſures; that at Malabar, where the young beauties appear in company half naked; that in certain parts of America, where the women wear no covering, the deſires have nothing of that ardour and vivacity, which curioſity would impart to them; that in thoſe countries, beauty ſerves only for the call of neceſſity; and that, on the contrary, among thoſe nations where modeſty has placed a veil between deſires and nudities, this myſterious veil is the taliſman which holds the lover at his charmer's feet; that in fine, modeſty puts, into beauty's weak hands, the ſcepter to which power ſubmits. Beſides, they will ſay to the woman of gallantry, You muſt know that the wretched are very numerous; that the unfortunate born enemies to the happy man, make a crime of his happineſs; that they hate in him a felicity too independent of them; that the ſubject of your amuſements is to be concealed from their ſight; and that levity and indecency, by betraying the ſecrets of your pleaſures, expoſes you to all the ſtrokes of their revenge.

By thus ſubſtituting the ſoft language of intereſt, inſtead of the peremptory clamour of invective, the moraliſts may eſtabliſh their maxims. I ſhall not enlarge farther on this head: but return to my ſubject; and I ſay, that all men tend only towards their happineſs; that it is a tendency from which they cannot be diverted; that the attempt would be fruitleſs, and even the ſucceſs dangerous; conſequently, it is only by incorporating perſonal and general intereſt, that they can be rendered virtuous. This being granted, morality is evidently no more than a frivolous ſcience, unleſs blended with policy and legiſlation: whence I conclude that, if philoſophers would be of uſe to the world, they ſhould ſurvey objects from the ſame point of view as the legiſlator. Though not inveſted with the ſame power they are to be actuated by the ſame principle. The moraliſt is to indicate the laws, of which the legiſlator inſures the execution by ſtamping them with the ſeal of his authority.

Among the moraliſts, there are doubtleſs but few duly impreſſed with this truth, even of thoſe whoſe minds are capable of the moſt exalted ideas; many in the ſtudy of morality, and the portraits of vices, are animated only by perſonal intereſt and private contentions; conſequently they confine themſelves only to the repreſentation of ſuch vices as moleſt ſociety; and their mind gradually contracting itſelf within the narrow circle of their intereſt, ſoon loſes the force neceſſary for ſoaring to ſublime ideas. In the ſcience of morality, the elevation of the thought often depends on the elevation of the ſoul. To fix on ſuch moral truths, as are of real advantage to men, there muſt be a warm paſſion for the general good; and unhappily morality, like religion, is not without hypocrites.

CHAP. XVI.

Of Hypocritical Moraliſts.

BY a hypocrite, I mean him who, in the ſtudy of morality, is not animated by a deſire of procuring the happineſs of mankind, being too much taken up with himſelf; this is a numerous claſs; and known on one hand by the coldneſs with which they they diſcuſs thoſe vices big with the fall of empires; and on the other, by their impotent invectives againſt private vices. It is in vain for ſuch to ſay, that they have the public welfare at heart. Were you really animated with ſuch a generous paſſion, it will be ſaid to them, your hatred to every vice would be always proportionate to the miſchief it does in ſociety; and if you are irritated at ſuch faults as are leaſt detrimental to a ſtate, with what eye ſhould you look on the ignorance of the proper means for form-valiant and magnanimous patriots? How extreme would be your concern at perceiving ſome faults in the adminiſtration of juſtice, or the aſſeſſment of taxes; or, how would you glow with indignation at a fault in military diſcipline, which ſo often decides the fate of battles, and the devaſtations of provinces? Were ſuch your temper, overcome by exceſs of grief, you would, like Nerva, deteſting life by which you are a ſpectator of the calamities of your country, terminate its courſe; or, at leaſt, you would imitate that heroic Chineſe, who juſtly provoked at the oppreſſions of the great, boldly entered the emperor's preſence with his complaints: "I come, ſays he, to offer myſelf to that puniſhment, which on account of ſuch repreſentations, ſix hundred of my fellow-ſubjects have already ſuffered. I give you notice to prepare for further execution; China has ſtill eighteen thouſand firm patriots, who, for the ſame information, will be coming to aſk of you the ſame reward." At theſe words he ceaſed ſpeaking; but the emperor, aſtoniſhed at his firmneſs, rewarded it in the manner moſt acceptable to a virtuous man, the puniſhment of the guilty, and the ſuppreſſion of oppreſſive impoſts. In this manner the love of the public welfare declares itſelf. If you are really animated by theſe paſſions, I would ſay to theſe cenſors, your hatred to every vice will be proportioned to its detriment to the ſtate: if it be only the offences injuring yourſelves, which excite your anger, the name of moraliſt does not belong to you; you are no more than mere egotiſts. Thus it is only by an abſolute detachment from perſonal intereſt, by a profound ſtudy of the ſcience of legiſlation, that a moraliſt can become ſerviceable to his country. He is then able to weigh the advantages or diſadvantages of a law or cuſtom, and to judge whether it ſhould be aboliſhed or continued.

We are too often obliged to comply with errors, or even barbarous cuſtoms; if in Europe, duels have been ſo long tolerated, it is becauſe in nations void of a Roman love for their country, and where courage is not exerciſed by continual wars, moraliſts probably could think of no other way of ſupporting courage, that the ſtate might not be deſtitute of valiant defenders; and by this toleration, they hoped to have purchaſed a great good at the expence of a ſmall evil.

evil. They were extremely deceived with regard to the particular caſe of dueling; but there are a thouſand others where this muſt be complied with, and it is often in the choice of two evils, that the man of genius diſtinguiſhes himſelf. Away with thoſe pedants enamoured with a falſe idea of perfection! nothing is more dangerous in a ſtate, than theſe ſenſeleſs moral declaimers, who concentered within a ſmall ſphere of ideas, are continually repeating what they have heard from their nurſes, inceſſantly recommending moderation in our deſires, and an univerſal extinction of the paſſions: not aware that their precepts, though uſeful to a few individuals in certain circumſtances, would prove the ruin of the nations that ſhould adopt them.

In fact, if, as hiſtory informs us, ſtrong paſſions, ſuch as pride and patriotiſm among the Greeks and Romans, fanaticiſm among the Arabs, and avarice among freebooters, always produce the moſt formidable wars; whatever general leads men without paſſions, againſt ſuch ſoldiers, will oppoſe only fearful lambs to the fury of wolves. Wiſe nature has therefore always placed in the heart of man, a preſervative againſt the reaſonings of ſuch philoſophers. Thus, the nations who ſubject their intentions to theſe precepts, always find themſelves feeble in action; and without this happy weakneſs, the people ſcrupulouſly attached to their maxims, would become the contempt, and the ſlaves of other nations.

It requires thoſe vaſt geniuſes that embrace all the parts of a government, to determine how far the fire of the paſſions ought to be exalted or moderated. Whoever is endowed with theſe abilities, is, in a manner, deſigned by nature to fulfil, with reſpect to the legiſlature, the part of a thinking miniſter (a); and to juſtify the obſervation of Cicero, that a man of genius is never a mere citizen, but a true magiſtrate.

Before we ſhew the advantages the univerſe would receive from more extenſive and more ſound ideas of morality, I think I ought to remark, by the way, that theſe ideas throw great light upon all the ſciences, eſpecially upon hiſtory, whoſe progreſs is at the ſame time the cauſe and effect of the progreſs of morality.

Were writers better inſtructed in the true objects of hiſtory, they would praiſe nothing in the private life of a king, but ſuch particulars as were proper to repreſent his character; they would not ſo curiouſly deſcribe his manners, and his domeſtic virtues and vices; they would be ſenſible, that the public demands from ſovereigns an account of their edicts, and not of their ſuppers; that the public love to know the man in the prince, only ſo far as the man has a ſhare in the deliberations of the prince; and that, inſtead of puerile anecdotes, they ought, in order to inſtruct and pleaſe, ſubſtitute the agreeable or dreadful picture of the public felicity or miſery, and the cauſes that produce them. From the mere exhibition of ſuch a picture would ariſe an infinite number of reflections and uſeful regulations.

(a) In China they diſtinguiſh two kinds of miniſters; the one are the Signing miniſters; who grant audiences, and add their ſignatures: the others bear the name of Thinking miniſters; and have the care of forming projects, examining thoſe who preſent them, and propoſing ſuch changes as times and circumſtances require to be made in the adminiſtration.

What I ſay of hiſtory, I alſo ſay of metaphyſics, and civil law. There are few ſciences but what have a relation to that of morality. The chain which connects them together, is more extenſive than we are apt to imagine; it ſurrounds the whole univerſe.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the advantages that reſult from the principles above eſtabliſhed.

I Paſs with rapidity over the advantages that would be obtained by individuals; theſe would conſiſt in their having clear ideas of morality; the principles of which have been hitherto ſo ambiguous and contradictory, that they permitted the moſt ſenſeleſs perſons conſtantly to juſtify the folly of their conduct by ſome of its maxims.

Beſides, the individual being better informed of his duties, would be leſs dependent on the opinion of his friends. Sheltered from the injuſtice wherein, unknown to himſelf, he might be frequently involved by thoſe with whom he converſes, he would be freed from the puerile fear of ridicule; a phantom that baniſhes reaſon, and is the terror of thoſe timid and ignorant ſouls, who ſacrifice their inclinations, their pleaſures, their repoſe, and ſometimes even their virtues, to the humour and caprice of thoſe ſplenetic mortals, whoſe criticiſm we cannot eſcape, when we have the misfortune to be known.

A perſon ſolely ſubject to reaſon and virtue, might then brave every prejudice, and arm himſelf with thoſe manly and courageous ſentiments that form the diſtinguiſhing character of a virtuous man: ſentiments deſirable in every citizen, and which we have a right to expect from the great. How ſhall the perſon, raiſed to the higheſt poſts, remove the obſtacles to the general welfare, which certain prejudices raiſe againſt it, and reſiſt the menaces and cabals of men in power, often intereſted in the public misfortnne, if his ſoul is not inacceſſible to all kind of ſollicitations, fears and prejudices?

It appears then, that the knowledge of the above principles procures at leaſt, theſe advantages to the individual; it gives him a clear and certain idea of honeſty; ſaves him from all inquietude on this ſubject, ſecures the peace of his conſcience, and conſequently procures him the inward ſecret pleaſure blended with the practice of virtue.

As to the advantages the public would derive from it, they would doubtleſs be more conſiderable. In conſequence of theſe principles, we might, if I may venture to uſe the expreſſion, compoſe a catechiſm of probity, the maxims of which being ſimple, true, and level to all underſtandings, would teach the people that virtue, though invariable in the object it propoſes, is not ſo in the means it makes uſe of; that, conſequently, we ought to conſider actions as indifferent in themſelves; to be ſenſible, that it is the buſineſs of the ſtate to determine thoſe that are worthy of eſteem or contempt; and, in fine, that it is the office of the legiſlator to fix, from his knowledge of the

public intereſt, the inſtant when an action ceaſes to be virtuous, and becomes vicious.

Theſe principles being once received, with what facility would the legiſlator extinguiſh the torches of fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition, ſuppreſs abuſes, reform barbarous cuſtoms, perhaps uſeful at their eſtabliſhment, but ſince become fatal to the world? Cuſtoms that ſubſiſt only from the fear of not being able to aboliſh them, without cauſing an inſurrection among the people, who are always accuſtomed to take the practice of certain actions for virtue itſelf, without kindling long and bloody wars; and in ſhort, without occaſioning thoſe ſeditions, which are always dangerous to the common-people, and can really be neither foreſeen or ſubdued, but by men of firmneſs and great abilities.

It is then by weakening the ſtupid veneration of the people for antient laws and cuſtoms, that ſovereigns would be enabled to purge the earth of moſt of the evils that lay it waſte, and be furniſhed with the means of ſecuring the poſſeſſion of their crowns.

At preſent, when the intereſt of a ſtate is changed, and the laws which at their firſt foundation were uſeful, are become prejudicial; thoſe very laws, by the reſpect conſtantly preſerved for them, muſt neceſſarily draw the ſtate to its ruin. Who doubts that the deſtruction of the Roman republic, was the effect of a rediculous veneration for the antient laws, and that this blind reſpect forged the fetters with which Cæſar loaded his country? After the deſtruction of Carthage, when Rome attained the ſummit of her glory, the Romans, from the oppoſition they then found between their intereſts, their manners and their laws, ought to have foreſeen the revolution with which the empire was threatened; and to have been ſenſible that to ſave the ſtate, the republic in a body ought to have preſſed the making thoſe reformations which the times and circumſtances required, and above all to haſten the prevention of thoſe changes that perſonal ambition, the moſt dangerous to the legiſlature, might introduce. The Romans would have had recourſe to this remedy, had they had clearer ideas of morality. Inſtructed by the hiſtory of all nations, they would have perceived, that the ſame laws which had raiſed them to the higheſt elevation, could not ſupport them in that ſtate; that an emperor is like a veſſel which the winds have driven to a certain latitude, where, being oppoſed by other winds, it is in danger of being loſt, if to avoid ſhipwreck, the pilot does not ſpeedily change his courſe: this political truth was well known to Mr. Locke, who, on the eſtabliſhment of the legiſlature of Carolina, propoſed that his laws ſhould be in force only during one century; and that time being expired, they ſhould become void, if they were not a-freſh examined and confirmed by the Engliſh. He was ſenſible that a military, or commercial government, ſuppoſed very different laws; and that a legiſlation proper to favour commerce and induſtry, might one day become fatal to that colony, if its neighbours entered into a war amongſt themſelves, and circumſtances made it neceſſary for that people to become more warlike than commercial.

If we apply Mr. Locke's idea to the falſe religions, we ſhall be ſoon convinced of the folly of their inventors, and their followers. Whoever, in fact, examines the religions, (all of which, except ours, are formed by the hand of man) muſt perceive, that none of them was ever contrived by the great genius of

of a legiſlator, but by the narrow mind of an ordinary perſon; that conſequently a falſe religion was never founded on the baſis of the laws, and a principle of public utility: a principle always invariable, but pliable in its application to all the various ſituations in which a people can ſucceſſively be placed. This is the only principle that ought to be admitted by thoſe, who, after the example of Anaſtaſius, Ripperda, Thamas Kouli-Kan, and Gehan-Guir, would trace the plan of a new religion, and render it of uſe to mankind. If in the compoſition of falſe religions, this plan had been always followed, they would have preſerved, in theſe religions, whatever is of uſe; they would neither have deſtroyed Elyſium, nor Tartarus; and the legiſlator might at his pleaſure have given pictures of them more or leſs pleaſing or terrible, according to the greater or leſſer ſtrength of his imagination. Theſe religions, merely ſtripped of what is hurtful in them, could not have laid the mind under the ſhameful yoke of a fooliſh credulity. What crimes and ſuperſtitions would then have vaniſhed from the earth! We ſhould not have ſeen an inhabitant of Java (a), perſuaded by the ſlighteſt inconvenience, that the fatal hour was come, make haſte to rejoin the god of his fathers, implore death, and conſent to receive it; the prieſts would have endeavoured, in vain, to obtain his conſent to be ſtrangled by their hands, and to ſuffer them to regale themſelves with his fleſh. The Perſians would have never nouriſhed that abominable ſect of derviſes, who demand alms ſword in hand; who kill with impunity, whoever does not admit their principles to be true; who raiſe a murdering hand againſt a Sophi, and plunge the poniard into the breaſt of an Amurath. The Romans, who were as ſuperſtitious as the Negroes (b), would not have regulated the exertion of their courage by the appetite of the ſacred chickens. In ſhort, the religions of the eaſt could not have produced thoſe long and bloody wars (c), firſt made by the Saracens againſt the chriſtians; and afterwards under the ſtandards of Omar and Hali, continued by the ſame Saracens againſt each other; and this doubtleſs gave birth to the fable made uſeof by a prince of Indoſtan, to ſuppreſs the indiſcreet zealof an Iman.

"Submit thyſelf, ſaid the Iman, to the order of the moſt high. The earth is going to receive his holy law; victory every where marches before Omar.

(a) To the eaſt of Sumatra.

(b) When the warriors of Congo, advance towards an enemy, if they meet in their way a hare, a crow, or ſome other fearful animal, they ſay it is the genius of the enemy, come to inform them of their fear, and then fight with intrepidity. But if they hear the crowing of a cock, at any other hour than is uſual, they ſay, it is a certain preſage of a defeat; and therefore they always reſolve not to expoſe themſelves to it. If the crowing of a cock is at the ſame time heard by both armies, no courage can detain them, for being equally frighted at the fatal omen, they inſtantly diſband themſelves, and both ſides retire. When the ſavage of New Orleans marches againſt the enemy with moſt intrepidity, a dream, or the barking of a dog is ſufficient to make him return home.

(c) The human paſſions have ſometimes kindled the like wars among the chriſtians themſelves; but nothing can be more contrary to the ſpirit of their religion, which is a ſpirit of diſintereſtedneſs and peace; to its morals, which breathe nothing but mildneſs and indulgence; to its maxims, which every where preſcribe beneficence and charity; to the ſpirituality of the objects it preſents to the mind; to the ſublimity of its motives; and, in ſhort, to the grandeur, and the nature of the rewards it propoſes.

Thou ſeeſt Arabia, Perſia, Syria, and all Aſia ſubdued: The Roman eagle is trampled under the feet of the faithful, and the ſword of terror is reſtored to the hand of Khaled. From theſe certain ſigns, acknowledge the truth of my religion, the ſublimity of the Koran, the ſimplicity of its doctrines, and the mildneſs of our law. Our God is not cruel; he is honoured by our very pleaſures; and, as Mohammed ſays, by breathing the odour of perfumes, and by taſting the voluptuous careſſes of love, my ſoul is kindled with new fervor, and ſprings with greater rapidity up towards heaven. Crowned inſect, how long wilt thou wreſtle againſt thy God? Open thine eyes, ſee the ſuperſtitions and vices with which thy people are infected: wilt thou for ever deprive thyſelf of the light of the Koran?"

"Iman, replied, the prince, there was a time when the republic of beavers, as in my empire, complained of a few robberies, and even of ſome aſſaſſinations: to prevent theſe crimes, nothing more was neceſſary, than to open ſome public treaſuries, where the rich might depoſite their wealth; to enlarge the high roads, and to erect a few priſons. The ſenate of beavers were ready to come to this reſolution, when one who was advanced in years, lifting up his eyes to the azure firmament, ſuddenly cried out, let us take example from man. He believes that the palace in the air is built, inhabited, and governed by a more powerful Being than himſelf: this Being is named Michapour. Let us publiſh this doctrine, that the nation of the beavers may ſubmit to it. Let us perſuade them that an etherial ſpirit is, by order of this God, placed as a centinel on each planet; that from thence contemplating our actions, he may be employed in diſpenſing happineſs to the good, and miſery to the wicked: this creed being once believed, guilt will fly far from us. He was ſilent; they enter into a conſultation; they deliberate on the affair; the idea pleaſes on account of its novelty, and is adopted: this becomes the eſtabliſhed religion, and the beavers at firſt live like brethren. Soon after, however, a great controverſy ariſes. One ſays that it is the otter, and another ſays, that it is the muſk-rat, who firſt preſented to Michapour, the grains of ſand with which he formed the earth. The diſpute grows warm; the people divide into parties; thy abuſe each other; from abuſe they come to blows, and Fanaticiſm ſounds her charge. Before that religion ſome robberies and aſſaſſinations had been committed; but now a civil war is kindled, and half the nation expires. Be inſtructed by this fable, and pretend not, O cruel Iman, added this Indian prince, to prove to me the truth and utility of a religion that ſpreads deſolation throngh the univerſe."

It follows from what has been ſaid in this chapter, that if the legiſlature were authoriſed, in conſequence of the principles above eſtabliſhed, to make ſuch changes in the laws, cuſtoms, and falſe religions, as the times and circumſtances required, they might drain the ſource of an infinite number of evils, and doubtleſs ſecure the repoſe of nations, by extending the duration of empires.

Beſides, what light would theſe principles ſpread over morality, in making us ſenſible of the neceſſary dependence there is between manners and the laws of a country; and by informing us that the ſcience of morality is nothing more than the ſcience of the legiſlature? Who doubts that the moraliſts, being more aſſiduous at this ſtudy, would then carry the ſcience to that high degree

degree of perfection, which good minds can now have only a glimpſe of, and to which perhaps they do not imagine it can ever arrive (d)?

If in almoſt every government, all the laws being incoherent, and inconſiſtent with each other, ſeem to be the work of mere chance; it is becauſe guided by different views and intereſts, thoſe who formed them, gave themſelves little trouble about the connection and agreement that ſubſiſted between them. It is with reſpect to the formation of theſe entire bodies of laws, as with the formation of certain iſlands. The peaſants reſolved to clear the fields of the uſeleſs woods, ſtones, herbs, and mud; for that purpoſe, they let in a river, when thoſe materials, driven by the currents, were collected into a heap about ſome reeds, they hardened, and at length formed a piece of dry land.

It is however, on the uniformity of the legiſlator's views, and the dependence of theſe laws on each other, that their excellence conſiſts. But, in order to eſtabliſh this dependence, it would be neceſſary to refer them all to one ſimple principle, ſuch as that of the public utility; or, to that of the greateſt number of men, ſubject to the ſame form of government: a principle more extenſive and more fruitful than imagination can conceive: a principle that includes all the morality and all the legiſlations, of which many men diſcourſe without underſtanding them, and of which the legiſlators themſelves have yet but a very ſuperficial idea, at leaſt if we may judge from the unhappineſs of almoſt all the nations upon earth (e).

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the Mind, conſidered with reſpect to different ages and countries.

I Have proved, that the ſame actions ſucceſſively uſeful and prejudicial in various ages and countries, were alternately eſteemed and deſpiſed. It is with ideas as with actions. The diverſity of the people's intereſts, and the changes produced in thoſe intereſts, produced revolutions in their taſtes,

(d) It is in vain to ſay, that, this great work of an excellent legiſlation is not to be performed by human wiſdom, and therefore no better than a mere chimera. I would ſuppoſe that a long and blind ſeries of events following each other, the firſt buds of which were unfolded at the creation, is the univerſal cauſe of all that has been or ſhall be. On admitting this principle, I add, that if in this long chain of events is neceſſarily comprehended the wiſe men and the fools, the cowards and the heroes that have governed the world, why may there not alſo be comprehended in it, the diſcovery of the true principles of government, to which that ſcience owes its perfection, and the world its happineſs?

(e) In moſt of the empires of the eaſt, they have not even the leaſt idea of the laws of nature and nations. Whoever ſhould endeavour to enlighten the people in this reſpect, would almoſt conſtantly expoſe himſelf to the fury of the tyrants, who lay waſte thoſe unhappy countries. In order to violate with the greater impunity the laws of humanity, they

their taſtes, occaſioned the ſudden creation, or entire annihilation of certain kinds of genius, and the unjuſt or proper, though, always reciprocal contempt which different geniuſes, ages, and countries have always felt for each other.

The truth of this propoſition I am going to prove in the two following chapters, by ſeveral examples.

CHAP. XIX.

The eſteem for different kinds of Genius is in every age proportioned to the intereſt the people have in eſteeming them.

TO ſhew the perfect juſtneſs of this propoſition, let us firſt take romances for an example. From the publication of Amadis to the romances of the preſent age, that kind of writing has ſucceſſively experienced a thouſand viciſſitudes. Would we know the cauſe? If it be aſked, why the romances that have been held in eſteem during three hundred years now appear tedious and ridiculous? we ſhall find that the principal merit of moſt of theſe works depends on the exactneſs with which, in theſe performances, the virtues and vices, the paſſions, cuſtoms, and follies of a nation are painted.

Now the manners of a nation generally change every age; this change muſt then occaſion a revolution in taſte, and conſequently in romances: one nation is therefore conſtantly forced by the very deſire of amuſement to deſpiſe in one age what it admired in that which preceded it (a). What I have ſaid of romances may be applied to almoſt all other works. But, to ſhew this truth in a ſtronger light, it may perhaps be proper to compare the genius of the ages of ignorance with that of the preſent age. Let us ſtop a moment to make this enquiry.

As the eccleſiaſtics were then the only perſons who were able to write, I can only draw my obſervations from their works and ſermons. Whoever reads them will perceive no leſs difference between thoſe of Menot (b) and father

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they will have their ſubjects ignorant of what, as men, they have a right to expect from the prince, and of the tacit contract by which he binds himſelf to his people. What reaſon ſoever theſe princes give for their conduct, it can only be founded on a perverſe deſire of tyranniſing over their ſubjects.

(a) Not but that theſe antient romances are ſtill agreeable to ſome philoſophers, who look upon them as the true hiſtory of the manners of the people, conſidered in a certain age, and under a certain form of government. Theſe philoſophers, convinced that there is a great difference between two romances, the one written by a Sibarite, and the other by a Crotoniate, chuſe to form a judgment of the character and genius of a nation from the kind of romance with which they are moſt charmed. Theſe ſorts of judgments are commonly very juſt: an able politician may, by theſe helps, determine pretty exactly what enterprizes it would be prudent or raſh to attempt againſt a nation. But common people, who read romances leſs for inſtruction than amuſement, do not conſider them in this point of view; and, conſequently, cannot form the ſame judgment from them.

(b) In one of Menot's ſermons, he treats of the promiſe of the Meſſiah, and ſays, "God had from all eternity pre-ordain-

father Bourdaloue, than between the knight of the ſun and the princeſs of Cleves. Our manners being changed, and our knowledge increaſed, we now laugh at what we formerly admired. Who does not ſmile at the ſermon delivered by a preacher at Bourdeaux, who, to ſhew the gratitude of the deceaſed, for all who cauſe prayers to be offered for them, and give for that purpoſe money to the monks, gravely cried out in the pulpit that, "at the mere ſound "of the money, which fell into a box or plate, and ſounded tin, tin, tin, all "the ſouls in purgatory, were ſeized with ſuch joy, that they could not forbear "laughing out ha, ha, ha (c)."

In the ſimplicity of the ages of ignorance, objects preſented themſelves under a very different aſpect from that in which they appear to enlightened eyes. The tragedies of our Saviour's paſſion, edifying as they were to our anceſtors, appear to us as ſcandalous. It ſeems the ſame with reſpect to almoſt all the ſubtil queſtions then debated in the divinity-ſchools. Nothing can appear more indecent than diſputes in form, whether God is naked or cloathed in the hoſt? whether if God be omnipotent, he has the power of ſinning? whether God could aſſume the nature of a woman, a devil, an aſs, a rock, a gourd, and a thouſand other queſtions ſtill more extravagant (d)?

Every

"ed the incarnation; and the ſalvation of the "human race; but he reſolved that ſome "great perſonages, ſuch as the holy fathers, "ſhould entreat for it. Adam, Enos, Enoch, "Methuſalah, Lamech, and Noah, after "having in vain beſought him for that pur-"poſe, agreed among themſelves to ſend "ambaſſadors to him, the firſt was Moſes, "the ſecond David, the third Iſaiah, and "the laſt the church; but theſe ambaſ-"ſadors having no better ſucceſs than the "patriarchs, they thought it adviſable to "ſend ſome women. Madam Eve preſented "herſelf firſt, to whom God made anſwer, Eve, "thou haſt ſinned, thou art not worthy of "my ſon. Afterwards they ſent madam Sarah, "who cried, O God, do thou help us; but "God ſaid, Thou haſt rendered thyſelf un-"worthy of it, by the incredulity thou ſhew-"eſt, when I reformed thee, that thou "ſhouldſt be the mother of Iſaac. The third "was madam Rebecca, to whom God ſaid, "Thou haſt done a great injury to Eſau, in "favour of Jacob. The fourth was madam "Judith, to whom God ſaid, Thou art an "aſſaſſin. The fifth was madam Eſther, to "whom he ſaid, Thou haſt been too great a "coquette; thou haſt ſpent thy time in "dreſſing thyſelf to pleaſe Ahaſuerus. At "length they ſent the chamber-maid, who "was fourteen years of age. She caſt down "her eyes, and with, a baſhful countenance, "kneeled and ſaid, let my beloved come into "my garden, and eat of the fruit of his ap-"ples; and the garden was the virgin's womb. "Now the ſon having heard theſe words, "ſaid, Father, I have loved her from my "youth, and will have her for my mother. "At that inſtant God called Gabriel, and "ſaid, O Gabriel, go to Nazareth and "preſent theſe letters from me to Mary: "and the ſon added, Take mine and tell "her, that I have choſen her to be my mo-"ther. Aſſure her, ſaid the Holy Ghoſt, "that I will dwell within her; let her know "that ſhe ſhall be my temple, and deliver to "her theſe letters." All Menot's other ſermons are nearly in the ſame taſte.

(c) In thoſe times ſuch ignorance prevailed, that an incumbent having a trial with his pariſhioners about who ſhould pave the church, the prieſt, when the judge was ready to give the cauſe againſt him, thought proper to quote this paſſage from the prophet Jeremiah, "Paveant illi, & ego not paveam;" when the judge not knowing what to anſwer, ordered that the church ſhould be paved at the expence of the pariſhioners.

There was a time, when the arts and ſciences were conſidered by the church as earthly things unworthy of a chriſtian. It is even ſaid on this ſubject, that an angel whipt St. Jerome for endeavouring to imitate Cicero's ſtyle. The abbé Cartaut pretends, that this was for imitating him but badly.

(d) Utrum Deus potuerit ſuppoſitare mu-

lieram,

Every thing, even miracles themſelves, bore in thoſe times of ignorance, the marks of the bad taſte of the age (e).

Among many of thoſe pretended miracles mentioned in the memoirs of the academy of inſcriptions and belles-lettres (f), I ſhall chuſe one wrought in favour of a monk. "This monk, returning from a houſe into which he "was introduced every night, had a river to paſs: but Satan overſetting the "boat, the monk was drowned, as he was beginning the invitatory of the ma-"tins to the Virgin Mary. Two devils ſeized his ſoul, but were ſtopped by "two angels, who claimed him on account of his being a chriſtian. My Lords, "ſaid the devils to the angels, 'tis true, God died for his friends, and that "is no fable; but this man was one of God's enemies: and ſince we "have found him in the filth of ſin, we ſhall go and caſt him into the mire "of hell, and ſhall be well rewarded by our provoſt. After many altercations, "the angels propoſed to refer the diſpute to the virgin's tribunal. The devils "replied, that they would freely take God for judge; becauſe his judgment "was always agreeable to the laws: but as for the virgin, ſaid they, we can-"not hope for juſtice from her; for ſhe would break all the gates of hell ra-"ther than leave there for a ſingle day, the perſon who, while living, per-"formed ſome reverences to her image. God contradicts her in nothing. "She may ſay, that the magpie is black, and that troubled waters are clear: "he agrees to every thing. We no longer know what we are about: of

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lierem, vel diabolum, vel aſinum, vel filicem, vel cucurbitam: & ſi ſuppoſitaſſet cucurbitam, quemadmodum fuerit concionatura, editura miracula, & quonammodo ſuiſſet fixa cruci. Apolog. p. Herodot. vol. iii. p. 127.

(e) Whatever may be ſaid in vindication of the ages of ignorance, it can never be proved, that they were favourable to religion, though they were to ſuperſtition. Therefore nothing can be more ridiculous than the declamations uttered againſt philoſophers, or againſt the academies in the country. Thoſe who compoſe them, it is ſaid, cannot enlighten the earth; they would therefore do better to cultivate it. Such men, it may be replied, are not in a condition to labour at that employment. Beſides, would it be of any advantage to agriculture, to regiſter them in the liſt of labourers, while we entertain ſo many mendicants, ſoldiers, artiſts in points of luxury, and domeſtics: this would be to recover the finances of a ſtate, by ſaving the ends of candles. I ſhall even add, that ſuppoſing theſe country academies make but few diſcoveries, we may at leaſt conſider them as the canals by which the knowledge of the capital is communicated to the provinces. Nothing can be of greater uſe than enlightening the minds of mankind: "Philoſophical "knowledge, ſays the abbé de Fleury, can "never be prejudical." "It is only by improving human reaſon, adds Mr. Hume, that nations can hope to improve their laws and politics." The mind is like fire, its effects are every where ſeen: there are few great politicians and great captains in a country, where there are no men diſtinguiſhed by their ſkill in literature and the ſciences. How can it be imagined, that a people, who know neither the art of writing, nor that of reaſoning, can form good laws, and free themſelves from that yoke of ſuperſtition which ſpread deſolation through the ages of ignorance? Solon, Lycurgus, and that Pythagoras who formed ſo many legiſlators, prove how far the progreſs of reaſon may contribute to the public happineſs. We ought therefore to conſider theſe country academies as very uſeful. I even ſay, that if we conſider the learned merely as traders, and compare the hundred thouſand livres the king diſtributes among the academies and the men of learning, with the produce of the ſale of our books to foreigners, we may aſſert, that this kind of commerce gained a thouſand per cent. to the ſtate.

(f) "Hiſtory of the academy of inſcriptions and Belles lettres, tome xviii."

" a duce ſhe will make a tre, of two duces two cinqs, ſhe holds both the dice " and the chance. The day when God made her mother was very fatal " to us."

People muſt doubtleſs be but little edified by ſuch a miracle; and the following is equally ridiculous. It is taken from Letters edifying and curious on the viſit of the biſhop of Halicarnaſſus; and appears to me ſo very extravagant, that I cannot reſiſt the deſire of placing it here

To prove the excellence of baptiſm the author relates, that " formerly in " the kingdom of Armenia was a king who had a great averſion to the " chriſtians; and therefore perſecuted thoſe of that religion in a very cruel " manner. He well deſerved to be puniſhed by the Almighty; but God, " who is infinitely good, and who opened the heart of St. Paul to convert him " when perſecuting the faithful, opened alſo the heart of this monarch, and made " him know his holy religion: for it happened as the king was holding a " council in the palace with the Mandarins, to deliberate on the means of abo- " liſhing intirely the chriſtian religion throughout his dominions, that the king " and Mandarins were immediately changed into ſwine. At the grunting of theſe " hogs, the people flocked thither, without knowing the cauſe of ſuch an ex- " traordinary change. Among them was a chriſtian named Gregory, who " had been put to the torture the day before; and, running at the noiſe occa- " ſioned by this event, reproached the king for his cruelty to thoſe of his reli- " gion. At Gregory's diſcourſe, the ſwine put a ſtop to their noiſe, became " ſilent, and lifted up their ſnouts to hear him, while Gregory examined them " in theſe terms: are you from this time forward reſolved to amend your " lives? At this demand, all the ſwine bowed their heads and cried, ouen, ouen, " ouen, as if they would have ſaid oui, (or yes). Then Gregory thus reſumed " his diſcourſe. If you are reſolved to amend; if you repent of your ſins, " and conſent to be baptiſed, in order that you may perfectly obſerve the holy " religion, the Lord will look upon you with pity; if not, you will be miſerable, " both in this world and the next. All the ſwine bowed their heads and " cried, ouen, ouen, ouen, as if they would have ſaid, they deſired to do ſo. " Gregory ſeeing the ſwine thus humbled, took holy water, and baptiſed them " all: and there immediately happened a great miracle; for, as he baptiſed " each hog, he inſtantly changed into a more beautiful perſon than he was " before."

Theſe miracles, ſermons, tragedies, and theological queſtions that appear ſo ridiculous to us, were, and muſt have been admired in the ages of ignorance; becauſe they were ſuited to the genius of the times, and men always admire ideas analogous to their own. The groſs ſtupidity of moſt of them would not permit them to form any conception of the holineſs and grandeur of religion; for with almoſt every body religion was in a manner nothing more than ſuperſtition and idolatry. But thanks to philoſophy, we may now ſay, that we have more elevated ſentiments. Whatever injuſtice has been done to the ſciences; whatever corruptions they are accuſed of introducing into our manners, it is certain that moſt of our clergy are now as pure as they were then depraved, at leaſt, if we give any credit to hiſtory and antient preachers. Maillard and Menot, the moſt celebrated among them, have always theſe words in their mouths: Sacerdotes religioſi, concubinarii. " Damned infa-

" mous

" mous wretches, cries Maillard, whoſe names are written in the regiſters " of the devil: thieves and robbers, as St. Bernard ſays, can you think that " the founders of your benefices gave you them to do nothing but to live " luxuriouſly and play with the girls? And you gentlemen, the fat abbots, " with your benefices, who keep horſes, dogs, and wenches, aſk St. Stephen " if he obtained paradiſe by leading ſuch a life as this, making good cheer, " being always at feaſts and banquets, giving wealth to the church, and the " crucifix to the ladies of pleaſure(g)?"

I ſhall ſtop no longer to conſider thoſe ſtupid ages in which all men, the ſuperſtitious and the brave, amuſed themſelves with nothing but the tales of the monks, and extravagant feats of chivalry. Ignorance and folly always prevail together: before the revival of philoſophy, authors, though born in different ages, wrote all in the ſame ſtrain. What is called taſte, ſuppoſes knowledge: but there is no taſte, and conſequently no revolutions of taſte among the people who continue barbarous; for theſe are only to be found in enlightened ages. Now theſe kinds of revolutions are always preceded by ſome change in the form of government, the manners, laws, and ſituation of a people. There is then a ſecret dependence eſtabliſhed between the taſte of a nation and its intereſt.

To illuſtrate this principle by ſome applications. If it be aſked, why the moſt memorable tragic paintings of revenge, ſuch as that of Attrides, does not kindle in us the ſame tranſports as thoſe with which they filled the Greeks? we ſhall find that this difference of impreſſion is occaſioned by the difference between our religion and polity, and the religion and polity of the Greeks.

The antients raiſed temples to revenge: that paſſion, now placed among the vices, was then reckoned among the virtues. The antient polity favoured this worſhip. In an age too warlike not to be a little ſavage, the only means of putting a reſtraint upon rage, fury, and treachery, was making it diſhonourable to forget an injury, and to place the picture of revenge by the ſide of that of an affront: thus they kept up in the hearts of the citizens a reſpectful and ſalutary fear, that ſupplied the defects of the government. The paint-

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(g) This Maillard, who with ſuch vehemence declaimed againſt the clergy, was not himſelf exempt from the vices with which he provoked his brethren. He was called the Gomorreen Doctor; and the following epigram was made on him, which appears tolerably well turned for the time:

Noſtre maiſtre Maillard tout par tout met le nez,
Tantoſt va chez le roy, tantoſt va chez la royne;
Il fait tout, il ſçait tout & à rien n'eſt idoine;
Il eſt grand orateur, poëte de mieux nés,
Juge ſi bon qu'au feu mille en a condamnés,
Sophiſte auſſy aigu que les feſſes d'un moine.
Mais il eſt ſi meſchant, pour n'eſtre paſs chanoine,
Qu'auprès de lui ſon ſaincts le diable & les damnés.
Si ſe fourrer par tout à gloire il le répute,
Pourquoy dedans Poiſſi n'eſt il à la diſpute?
Il dit qu'à grand regret il en eſt eloigné;
Car Beze il eut vaincu, tant il eſt habile homme.
Pourquoi donc n'y eſt-il? Il eſt embeſoigné.
Après les fondemens pour rebaſtir Sodome.

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ing of that paſſion was ſo very analogous to the antient prejudices of the people, that it could not fail of being examined with pleaſure.

But in the age in which we live, at a time when the police is much improved, and in which we are no longer ſubject to the ſame prejudices, it is evident, that from conſulting in the ſame manner our own intereſt, we muſt ſee with indifference the painting of a paſſion, which, far from maintaining peace and harmony in ſociety, produces nothing but diſorders and uſeleſs cruelties. Why do the tragedies, full of thoſe brave and manly ſentiments that inſpire a love of our country, now make ſo ſlight an impreſſion upon us? Becauſe it is very uncommon for people to unite a certain degree of courage and virtue with an extreme ſubmiſſion: thus the Romans became baſe and vile as ſoon as they had obtained a maſter, and as Homer ſays, "The dreadful inſtant that puts the freeman in irons, ſnatches from him half his primeval virtue." Whence I conclude, that the ages of liberty, which produce great men, and great paſſions, are the only times wherein people are really admirers of brave and noble ſentiments.

Why was Corneille's manner ſo much admired, while that great poet was living, and ſo little reliſhed at preſent? It is becauſe, being juſt eſcaped from thoſe troubleſome times, when minds, heated by the fire of ſedition, are more daring, fonder of bold ſentiments, and more ſuſceptible of ambition; it is becauſe the characters Corneille gives his hereos, and the projects he makes the ambitious form were conſequently more analogous to the ſpirit of the age, than they are now, at a time when we have few heroes (h), few true citizens, and few men enflamed by ambition, ſince a happy calm has ſucceeded ſo many ſtorms, and the volcanos of ſedition are extinct.

How can an artiſt, accuſtomed to groan under the weight of indigence and contempt; a rich man, and even a great lord accuſtomed to cringe to a man in a high poſt, and to regard him with that ſacred reſpect which the Egyptian feels for his Gods, and the negro for his idol, be ſtruck with the verſe, where Corneille ſays,

"Pour être plus qu'un roi, tu te crois quelque choſe?"

That is,

To be more than a king, thou thinkeſt thyſelf ſomething.

Such ſentiments muſt appear to them fooliſh and gigantic. They cannot admire elevation of mind without frequently bluſhing at the abject ſtate of their own; therefore if, we except a ſmall number of wits and men of elevated genius, who ſtill preſerve a rational and felt-eſteem for Corneille, the other admirers of that great poet eſteem him leſs from their own judgment and taſte, than from hearſay, and a favourable propoſſeſſion.

Every change in government, or the manners, of a people muſt neceſſarily introduce a revolution in taſte. From age to age, people are differently ſtruck with the ſame objects, according to the different paſſions by which they are animated.

(h) Civil wars are a misfortune, to which we frequently owe great men.

It is with reſpect to the ſentiments of men as with their ideas; if we only conceive in others the ideas analogous to our own, we can only, ſays Salluſt, be affected by thoſe paſſions which ſtrongly affect ourſelves (i).

To be touched with the painting of ſome paſſion, we muſt have felt it ourſelves.

Let us ſuppoſe that the ſhepherd Tircis meets with Cataline, and that they reciprocally make each other the confident of the ſentiments of love and ambition with which they are agitated; they certainly can only communicate to each other an impreſſion of the paſſions that animate them, but very different from what they feel themſelves. The firſt cannot conceive that there is any thing ſo captivating in ſupreme power; and the ſecond, that there is ſuch a charm in the tender ſmile of a woman beloved. Now, to apply the different kinds of tragedy to this principle, I ſay, that in every country where the inhabitants have no ſhare in the management of public affairs; where the words, country and citizen are ſeldom mentioned, the public can be only pleaſed by repreſenting on the ſtage, paſſions ſuited to the people; ſuch for inſtance as love. Not that all men are equally ſenſible of this: it is certain that fierce and bold minds, the ambitious, politicians, miſers, and men involved in important affairs are but ſlightly touched with the painting of that paſſion: and this is the very reaſon why dramatic pieces have not ſuch great ſucceſs as in republican ſtates, where the hatred of tyrants, the love of liberty and of our country are the points for engaging the public eſteem.

In any other government, the citizens not being united by a common intereſt, the diverſity of perſonal intereſts muſt neceſſarily oppoſe the univerſality of the applauſe. In theſe countries we can only pretend to a greater or leſſer ſucceſs, by painting ſuch paſſions as are more or leſs generally intereſting to individuals. Now among the paſſions of this kind, there is no doubt, but that of love, which is in part founded on a neceſſity of nature, is the moſt univerſally felt. Thus we now prefer in France, Racine to Corneille, who, in another age, or perhaps in a different country, ſuch as England, would probably have the preference.

This proceeds from weakneſs, that is a neceſſary conſequence of luxury, and a change of manners; which, depriving us of all ſtrength and elevation of mind, makes us already prefer comedies to tragedies, which are now nothing but comedies in an elevated ſtyle, where the action is performed in a king's palace.

The happy encreaſe of ſovereign authority, which diſarming ſedition, and degrading the condition of tradeſmen, has almoſt entirely baniſhed them from the comic ſcene; where we no longer ſee any, but men of a good air and in high life, who really fill the place that was formerly poſſeſſed by men of the common rank, and are properly the bourgois of the age.

We ſee then, that at different times, certain kinds of genius made very different impreſſions on the public; but that theſe were always proportioned to

(i) At ſeeing an account of an heroic action, the reader believes nothing that he is not capable of doing himſelf: he rejects the reſt as mere invention.

their

their intereſt in approving them. Now, this public intereſt is ſometimes ſo very different in one age from what it is in the next, as to occaſion the ſudden creation or annihilation of certain kinds of ideas and works; ſuch are all thoſe of controverſy, which are now as unknown, as they were, and ought to have been, formerly, known and admired.

In fact, at a time when the people being divided about their creed, were animated by a ſpirit of intemperate zeal; when thoſe of each ſect, ardent to maintain their opinions, would take up either the ſword or arguments to declare, prove, and cauſe them to be adopted by the whole world; works of controverſy were, on account of the ſubjects, too generally intereſting not to be univerſally eſteemed; beſides theſe works were wrote, at leaſt on the part of certain heretics, with all the addreſs and ſpirit imaginable, to perſuade a perſon of the truth of the tale of an Aſs's ſkin; or that of Blue-beard, which reſemble ſome hereſies (k). The controverſal writers were obliged to employ in their writings, all the art, the force, and the reſources of logic, that their works might be maſter-pieces of ſubtilty, and perhaps in this particular the greateſt efforts of the human mind. It is therefore certain, both from the importance of the ſubject, and from the manner of treating it, that the controvertiſts muſt have then been conſidered as the writers moſt worthy of eſteem.

But in an age, when the ſpirit of fanataciſm has almoſt entirely fled; when both the king and people, inſtructed by paſt misfortunes, no longer employ themſelves in theological diſputes; and when the principles of the true religion are daily more and more confirmed, theſe writers ought no longer to make the ſame impreſſion on the minds of the people. Thus a perſon now reads thoſe writings with the ſame diſguſt that he would find in peruſing a Peruvian controverſy, in which is debated, whether Mancocapac is, or is not the ſon of the ſun.

To confirm what I have juſt ſaid, by a fact that has fallen within our own obſervation, let us call to mind the heat with which the diſpute was carried on, in relation to the ſuperiority of the antients over the moderns. This fanaticiſm gave reputation to ſeveral indifferent diſſertations compoſed on this ſubject; and yet the indifference with which it has been ſince conſidered, has ſuffered to be loſt in oblivion, the diſſertations of the celebrated de la Motte, and the learned abbé Terraſſon: diſſertations which, notwithſtanding their having a juſt title to be conſidered as maſter-pieces and models in this kind of writing, are almoſt unknown to all but men of learning.

Theſe examples are ſufficient to prove, that to the public intereſt differently modified, according to the different ages, we ought to attribute the creation, and annihilation of certain kinds of ideas and works.

Nothing now remains but to ſhew how this public intereſt, in ſpite of the changes that daily happen in the manners, paſſions, and taſtes of a people, may however ſecure to certain works the conſtant eſteem of all ages.

For this purpoſe we muſt remember, that the manner of writing in moſt eſteem in one age and country, is often the moſt deſpiſed in another age and in another country; and conſequently, that this is not what is ſtrictly

(k) See the hiſtory of Hereſies, by St. Epiphanius.

called, genius. Now among the ſentiments entertained of theſe pieces, ſome are fleeting and others durable. We may then reduce to two kinds, all the different ſpecies of genius: the one, where a momentary utility is dependent on the changes that happen in commerce, government, the paſſions, employments, and prejudices of a people, which may be termed, The ſpirit of the mode (1): the other, whoſe utility is eternal, unalterable, independent of the various manners and governments, confined to the very nature of man, and conſequently always invariable. This may perhaps be conſidered as the true genius, or that moſt deſirable.

All kinds of genius being thus reduced to theſe two, I ſhall conſequently diſtinguiſh the works produced by them into two ſorts.

The one is deſigned to have a glorious and rapid ſucceſs; the other, a ſucceſs more extenſive and durable. A ſatyrical romance, for inſtance, in which is painted in a true, but ſevere light, the follies of the great, will certainly have a run among the common people. Nature, who has engraven on all hearts the ſenſation of primitive equality, has placed an eternal ſeed of hatred between the great and the little: theſe laſt, therefore, ſeize, with all the pleaſure and ſagacity poſſible, the fineſt ſtrokes of theſe ridiculous pictures, whereever the great appear unworthy of their ſuperiority. Such works muſt then have a rapid, though not an extenſive and durable ſucceſs: not extenſive, becauſe it is neceſſarily confined to the country where theſe follies took their birth; and not durable, becauſe the mode, by introducing new follies, diſplaces the old ones, and thus ſoon effaces the remembrance of the follies of the men, and of the authors who have exhibited them; and becauſe, weary of contemplating the ſame follies, the malignity of the common-people makes them ſearch for freſh faults, from new motives of juſtifying their contempt for the great. Their impatience, in this reſpect, ſtill haſtens the fall of theſe works, and their fame is frequently ſhorter than the duration of the ridicule.

Such is the ſucceſs that neceſſarily attends a ſatyrical romance. In regard to a work on morality or metaphyſics, it cannot ſucceed in the ſame manner; the deſire of inſtruction, which is always more uncommon, and leſs lively than that of cenſure, cannot furniſh in one nation, either ſo great a number of readers; or of ſuch paſſionate admirers. Beſides, the principles of theſe ſciences, with whatever clearneſs they are repreſented, always require from the readers, a degree of attention that muſt neceſſarily diminiſh their number very conſiderably.

But if the merit of this moral or metaphyſical work is not ſo ſpeedily known as thoſe of a ſatyrical kind, it is more generally acknowledged; becauſe treatiſes, ſuch as thoſe of Locke or Nicole, which treat neither of an Italian, a Frenchman, nor an Engliſhman, but of man in general, muſt neceſſarily find readers among all civilized nations, and even continue to do ſo in every

(1) I underſtand by this word, whatever belongs to the nature of man and of things: I conſequently comprehend under the ſame word, the works that appear to us more durable: ſuch are the falſe religions which ſucceſſively take place of each other, and in relation to the revolutions of ages, may be reckoned among the works of the mode.

age. Whatever work derives its merit from the elegance of the obſervations made on the nature of man and things, cannot ceaſe to pleaſe at any time.

I have ſaid enough to ſhew the true cauſe of the different kinds of eſteem united to the exertion of different kinds of genius; if any doubts ſtill remained on this ſubject, I might, by making freſh applications of the principles above eſtabliſhed, obtain freſh proofs of their truth.

Would we know, for example, what would be the different ſucceſs of two writers, one of whom diſtinguiſhed himſelf by the depth of his thoughts, and the other by the elegance of his language? In conſequence of what I have ſaid, the ſucceſs of the firſt will be ſlower; becauſe many more are judges of the delicacy, the graces, the pleaſing turn of an expreſſion, and in fine of all the beauties of ſtyle, than of the beauty and juſtneſs of ideas. A polite writer, like Malherbe, muſt then have a ſucceſs more rapid than extended, and more ſhining than durable. There are two reaſons for this; the firſt is, that a work tranſlated from one language to another, always loſes in the tranſlation the freſhneſs and ſtrength of its colouring; and conſequently paſſes to ſtrangers, ſtripped of the charms of ſtyle, which upon my ſuppoſition is its principal excellence; the ſecond is, that the language inſenſibly grows old; the moſt happy turns of expreſſion become, at length, more common; and in ſhort, the work being thus, in the very country where it was compoſed, deprived of the beauties that rendered it agreeable, can at moſt preſerve for the author only the eſteem of tradition.

In order to obtain an entire ſucceſs, it is neceſſary, that fine ideas ſhould be dreſſed in the beauties of language. Without this happy choice, a work cannot ſtand the teſt of time, and eſpecially of a tranſlation, which may be conſidered as the moſt proper crucible for ſeparating the pure gold from the tinſel. Thus we ought to attribute to this defect of ideas, too common to our antient poets, the unjuſt contempt which many judicious perſons have conceived againſt poetry.

I ſhall only add one word to what I have ſaid: namely that, among the works deſerving to be celebrated through all ages and countries, there are ſome which being in a peculiar manner more generally intereſting to human nature, muſt have a ſpeedier and more extenſive ſucceſs. To be convinced of this, it is ſufficient to recollect that, among men there are few who have not experienced ſome paſſion: that moſt of them are leſs pleaſed with the depth of an idea, than with the beauty of a deſcription; that, as experience proves, almoſt all of them have felt more than they have ſeen, but have ſeen more than they have reflected (m); ſo, the paintings of the paſſions muſt be more generally agreeable, than thoſe of natural objects; and a poetical deſcription of the ſame objects muſt find more admirers than philoſophical works. Even with regard to theſe laſt works, men being leſs deſirous of underſtanding botany, geography, and the fine arts, than of knowing the human heart, the excellent philoſophers of this laſt kind muſt be more generally known and eſteemed than

(m) This is the reaſon why in Greece, Rome, and almoſt all countries, the poetical age has always foretold and preceded that of philoſophy.

botaniſts, geographers, and great critics. Thus, M. de la Motte, (if I may be allowed to mention him as an example) would have been doutleſs more generally known and eſteemed, had he treated more intereſting ſubjects, with the ſame delicacy, elegance, and judgment, he has ſhewn in his diſcourſes on the ode, fable, and tragedy.

The public, ſatisfied with admiring the moſt finiſhed pieces of celebrated poets, ſet little value on great critics, whoſe works are only read, judged, and valued by perſons verſed in that art, to whom they are of uſe. This is the true cauſe of the ſmall proportion obſerved between the reputation and merit of M. de la Motte.

Let us now ſee what are the works that ought to have a rapid, as well as an extenſive and durable ſucceſs.

The ſeveral kinds of ſucceſs are to be obtained at once, only in the works where, according to my principles, the authors have joined a momentary and durable utility; as in certain poems, romances, theatrical pieces, and moral and political writings: on which it is proper to obſerve, that theſe works, ſoon ſtripped of the beauties that depend on the manners and prejudices of the times and countries where they are written, preſerve nothing for poſterity but the beauties common to all ages and countries; and for this reaſon, Homer muſt now appear leſs agreeable than he did to the Greeks of his time. But this loſs; or, if I may preſume to ſay ſo, this diminution of merit, is more or leſs great, according as the durable beauties which enter into the compoſition of a work, and are always unequally mixed with thoſe of a day, have a greater or leſs aſcendency over theſe laſt. Why is the Learned women of the celebrated Moliere, already leſs eſteemed than his Miſer, his Tartuffe, and his Miſanthrope? People have not calculated the number of ideas contained in each of theſe pieces, and conſequently they have not determined the degree of eſteem due to them; but they have found by experience, that a comedy, ſuch as the Miſer, where the ſucceſs is founded on the painting of a vice that ever ſubſiſts, and is always prejudicial to mankind, neceſſarily includes an infinite number of beauties, that flow from the happy choice of the ſubject, which renders them durable: on the contrary, a comedy, ſuch as that of the Learned women, whoſe ſucceſs was only ſupported by a faſhionable and tranſient folly, could only ſparkle with thoſe momentaneous beauties that ariſe from the ſubject; and though once perhaps, more proper to make a lively impreſſion on the public, could not make thoſe that are ſo durable. Hence we ſeldom ſee among different nations, celebrated pieces paſs with ſucceſs from one theatre to another.

The concluſion of this chapter is, that the eſteem granted to all works of genius, is, in every age, always proportionable to the intereſt people have in eſteeming them.

CHAP. XX.

Of Genius conſidered in relation to different countries.

WHAT I have ſaid on the different ages, I apply to different countries; and prove that the eſteem or contempt affixed to the ſame kind of genius among different people, are always the effect of the different forms of their governments, and conſequently, of the diverſity of their intereſts.

Why is eloquence held in ſuch eſteem in republics? It is becauſe, by the form of their government, eloquence opens a way to riches and grandeur. Now the fondneſs and regard all men entertain for wealth and honour muſt neceſſarily make them reflect on the proper means of acquiring them. In republics, honour is paid, not only to eloquence, but to all the ſciences, which, like politics, civil law, morality, poetry, or philoſophy, may ſerve to form orators.

In deſpotic countries, on the contrary, they ſet but little value on the ſame kind of eloquence; becauſe it does not lead to fortune. In thoſe countries it is ſcarcely of any uſe, becauſe men do not give themſelves the trouble to perſuade when they can command.

Why did the Spartans affect to ſhew great contempt for that kind of genius proper to carry to perfection works of luxury? It was, becauſe a poor little republic, that could only oppoſe the virtue and valour of its citizens againſt the formidable power of Perſia, ought to deſpiſe all the arts adapted to enervate the brave, which were perhaps with reaſon deified at Tyre, or at Sidon.

Why have the people of England leſs eſteem for the art of war, than the antient Romans and Greeks? It is becauſe the Engliſh having now more of the Carthagenian than the Roman, are, by the form of their government, and their natural ſituation, leſs in need of great generals, than of able merchants; it is becauſe, the ſpirit of trade, which neceſſarily leads in its train, a taſte for luxury and effeminacy, muſt every day encreaſe, in their eſteem, the value of gold and induſtry, muſt daily diminiſh their regard for the military art, and even for courage: a virtue, which among a free people, for a long time ſupported the national pride; but nevertheleſs, growing daily weaker and weaker, may, perhaps, be the diſtant cauſe of the fall, or ſubjection of that nation. If, on the contrary, celebrated writers, as for example, a Locke, and a Addiſon, have been hitherto more honoured in England, than in any other country, it is from its being impoſſible, that a high value ſhould not be ſet on merit, in a country where every citizen has a ſhare in the management of affairs in general, and where every man of abilities may enlighten the public with reſpect to its true intereſt. For this reaſon, we ſo commonly meet in London, with knowing men, who are with much more difficulty

culty found in France: not that the climate of England, as has been pretended, is more favourable to genius than ours; the list of our celebrated men, in war, politics, and the arts and sciences, is perhaps more numerous than theirs. If the English nobility are in general more learned than ours, it is because they are forced to acquire knowledge to recompence them for the advantages the form of our government may have over theirs; they have therefore, in this respect, a very considerable one over ours; an advantage which they will preserve, till luxury has entirely corrupted the principles of their government, till it has made them insensibly bend their necks to servitude, and has taught them to prefer riches to talents. It is a merit at London to have learning; but at Paris it is ridiculous. This is sufficient to justify the answer made by a foreigner to the duke of Orleans, regent of France, who examined him with respect to the character and different genius of the several nations of Europe. The only manner of replying to your royal highness's question, said the foreigner, is to repeat the first questions that among the different nations is most commonly asked on the appearance of a person among them. In Spain, added he, they ask, Is he a grandee of the first quality? In Germany, Is he admitted into the chapters? In France, Is he respected at court? In Holland, How much money is he worth? In England, What sort of a man is he?

The same general interest, which in republican states, and those of a mixed government, presides in the distribution of esteem, is also in empires subject to despotic power, the sole distributer of that esteem. If in those governments little regard is shewn to genius; and if at Ispahan and Constantinople, they have more respect for the eunuch, the icoglan, and the pascha, than for men of merit; it is because, the people there have no interest in esteeming great men: not that these great men are in those countries useless and displeasing; but none of the individuals of whom the public is composed, have any interest in becoming so, and every person has always little esteem for what he has no ambition to obtain.

Who in those empires can engage a single person to support the fatigues of study, and the meditations necessary to carry his abilities to perfection? Great talents are always suspected in unjust governments; and abilities can neither procure dignities nor riches. Riches and dignities are however the only advantages visible to all eyes, the only ones reputed real blessings, and as such are universally desired. In vain is it said, that they are insipid to the possessor, they are, if you will, decorations that are sometimes disagreeable in the eyes of the actor; but nevertheless, they always appear admirable in the point of view from whence they are contemplated by the spectator; and therefore people make the greatest efforts to obtain them. Thus illustrious men only increase in countries, where honour and riches are purchased by great abilities; and thus despotic states are, from a contrary reason, always barren of great men. Upon which I shall observe, that gold is now of such great value in the eyes of all nations, that in governments infinitely more wise, and learned, the possession of that metal is almost always considered as the first merit. How many rich men are there, who, elated by universal homage, think

themſelves ſuperior to (n) men of abilities; felicitate themſelves in a tone ſuperbly modeſt, for having preferred the uſeful to the agreeable; and having, in the want of genius, ſay they, made a purchaſe of good ſenſe, which, according to the ſignification they affix to the word, is the true, the good, and the ſupreme genius! Such men muſt always take philoſophers for viſionary ſpeculatiſts, their writings for works ſeriouſly frivolous, and ignorance for merit.

Riches and honours are too much coveted, for any one to honour talents in the people, where the pretenſions to merit are excluſive of the pretenſions to fortune. Where is the country in which, to make a fortune, a man of genius is not obliged to loſe, in the antichamber of a protector, the time which to excel in any manner, he ought to employ in cloſe and continual ſtudies? To what flattery, to what meanneſſes, muſt he ſtoop to obtain the favour of the great? If he is born in Turky, he muſt expoſe himſelf to the diſdain of a mufti, or a ſultana; in France, to the affrontive goodneſs of a great lord, (o) or a place-man, who deſpiſing in him a kind of genius too different from his own, conſiders him as a man uſeleſs to the ſtate, incapable of ſerious affairs, and like a pretty child entirely taken up with ingenious trifles. Beſides, being ſtrictly jealous of the reputation of men of merit (p), and afraid of their cenſure, the place-man receives them leſs from taſte than from oſtentation, only to ſhew that he has people of all kinds at his houſe. Now, how can it be imagined, that a man animated by a paſſion for glory, which makes him deſire the ſweets of pleaſure, will debare himſelf ſo far? Whoever is born to do honour to the age in which he lives, is always on his guard againſt the great; he enters into connections with none but perſons whoſe genius and character are calculated to make him eſteem people of abilities, and to be diſguſted in moſt companies; ſeeks for, and meets a man of genius, with the ſame pleaſure that two Frenchmen find in meeting with each other in China, where they become friends at firſt ſight.

(n) Seduced by their own vanity, and the praiſes of a thouſand flatterers, the moſt moderate among them believe themſelves at leaſt ſuperior to every one who is not above them in this reſpect. They do not perceive that it is with men of genius as with thoſe who run a race: ſuch a one, ſay they to each other, does not run at all. Yet, it is neither the impotent, nor the man of the ordinary capacity who gains the prize.

If people are ſilent, with reſpect to the poor abilities of moſt of the men ſo vain of their riches; it is becauſe they do not even think of mentioning them. People's ſilence, with reſpect to us, is always a bad ſign; it proceeds from their being unable to be revenged on us for our ſuperiority. They ſay little that is bad of thoſe who do not deſerve praiſe.

(o) They ſometimes counterfeit good men; but through their goodneſs, as through the rents in Diogenes's cloak, we may perceive their vanity.

(p) "On my entering into the world, "ſaid the preſident de Monteſquieu, one day "I was introduced as a man of genius, and "was received favourably enough by the men "in place: but when, by the ſucceſs of "the Perſian Letters, I had perhaps, proved, "that this character was juſt; and that I had "obtained ſome eſteem from the public, "that of the place-men grew cold, and I "ſuffered a thouſand mortifications. You "muſt imagine, added he, that, ſecretly "hurt by the reputation of a man who had "obtained ſome applauſe, they humbled him "out of revenge; and that a man himſelf "ought to merit many praiſes, to enable "him to ſupport patiently the praiſes of "another."

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The character therefore proper to form illuſtrious men neceſſarily expoſes them to the hatred, or at leaſt the indifference of the great, and of men in place, eſpecially among people like the Orientals, who, being rendered ſtupid by the form of their government, and their religion, remain in a ſhameful ignorance; and hold, if I may preſume to ſay ſo, the middle rank between men and brutes.

After having proved that the want of eſteem for merit, is, in the Eaſt, founded on the ſmall intereſt people have in eſteeming men of genius; the better to ſhew the power of that intereſt, let us apply to this principle things that are more familiar to us. Let us examine, why the public intereſt, modified according to the form of our government, gives us, for inſtance, ſuch a diſguſt for that kind of diſpenſations that appear to us inſupportable: and we ſhall find that theſe diſſertations, are heavy and tireſome; that the citizens having, by the form of our government, leſs occaſion for inſtruction than amuſement, they generally deſire only thoſe works that can render them agreeable in company: they muſt conſequently ſet little value on cloſe reaſoning: and muſt more or leſs reſemble that courtier, who, being leſs tired than perplexed by the reaſons a wiſe man brought in proof of his opinion, cried out haſtily, Oh! ſir, I would not have it proved to me.

Every thing among us yields to lazineſs. If in converſation, we only make uſe of looſe and hyperbolical phraſes; if exaggeration is become the peculiar eloquence of our age and nation; and if we ſet no value on the juſtneſs and preciſion of our ideas and expreſſions, it is becauſe we are no ways intereſted to eſteem them. It is out of reſpect to this lazineſs, that we conſider taſte as a gift of nature, an inſtinct ſuperior to all the rational knowledge, and in ſhort, as a quick and lively ſenſation of good and evil; a ſenſation that diſpenſes us from all examination, and reduces all the rules of criticiſm to two ſingle words, Delightful and Deteſtable. To the ſame lazineſs we alſo owe ſome of the advantages we enjoy above other nations. Our little propenſity to application, which will ſoon render us incapable of it, makes us deſire a clearneſs in all works, to ſupply this incapacity for attention; we are children, who in our reading muſt be ſupported by the leading-ſtring of order. An author muſt therefore then take all the pains imaginable to prevent his readers taking any; and ſhould often repeat, after Alexander, "O Athenians, how much has it coſt me to obtain your praiſes!" Now the neceſſity of being clear, in order to be read, renders us, in this reſpect, ſuperior to the Engliſh, who give themſelves the leſs trouble about being extremely clear, becauſe their readers pay leſs regard to it; for their minds being more uſed to cloſe application, they can the more eaſily ſupply this defect. This in a ſcience like metaphyſics, may give us ſome advantage over our neighbours. If people have always applied to this ſcience the proverb, "There is no wonder without a veil;" and if its darkneſs has long cauſed it to be treated with reſpect, our lazineſs now no longer endeavours to pierce through it, its obſcurity renders it contemptible: people would have it ſtripped of the unintelligible language in which it has been hitherto cloathed, and ſeparated from the clouds of myſtery wherein it was involved. Now this deſire, which is ſolely owing to our lazineſs, is the only means of rendering metaphyſics, that has been hitherto only a ſcience of words, a ſcience of things. But to ſatisfy the taſte of the public

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on this point, as the illuſtrious hiſtoriographer of the academy of Berlin remarks, "it is neceſſary that minds ſhould break the ſhackles of ſuperſtitious "reſpect, know the limits which ought eternally to ſeparate reaſon and reli- "gion, that enquirers fooliſhly averſe to every work founded on argumenta- "tion, may no longer be condemned as a nation of triflers."

What I have ſaid is, I think, ſufficient to diſcover at the ſame time, the cauſe of our fondneſs for tales and romances, our ſuperiority in the frivolous, and yet difficult art of talking and ſaying nothing, and of the preference we give to a ſprightly wit, above any other kind of genius; a preference that accuſtoms us to conſider the wit as a diverting creature, and to diſgrace him, by confounding him with a harlequin; and a preference, in fine, that renders us the moſt gallant, the moſt amiable, and the moſt frivolous people in Europe.

It neceſſarily follows, from our manners, that we ought to be ſo. The path to ambition is, by the form of our government, that againſt moſt of the citizens, and nothing remains for them but pleaſure. Among the pleaſures, that of love is the moſt lively; in order to enjoy it, we muſt render ourſelves agreeable to the women; as ſoon as love is felt, that of pleaſing ought to kindle in our breaſts. Unhappily, it is with lovers as with thoſe winged inſects that take the colour of the herb to which they attach themſelves; it is only, by borrowing the reſemblance of the object beloved, that a lover is enabled to pleaſe. Now, if the women, by education, acquire rather trifling endowments, and graces, than ſtrength and juſtneſs of ideas, our minds being modelled by theirs, muſt conſequently catch the ſame defects.

There are only two ways of ſecuring ourſelves from them. The firſt is improving the education of women; giving them more elevation of ſoul, and more extent to their minds. There is no doubt, but we ſhould be enabled to perform great things, if we had a love for our preceptor, and the hand of beauty was to caſt into our minds, the ſeeds of wit and virtue. The ſecond means, (and this is what I certainly cannot adviſe), would be to diſincumber the women of thoſe remains of modeſty, which, before it can be ſacrificed, gives them a right to require the perpetual worſhip and adoration of their lovers. The favours of women would then become more common, and appear leſs precious; and the men becoming more independent and more wiſe, would loſe in their company only the hours conſecrated to love, and conſequently they might enlarge and ſtrengthen their minds by ſtudy and meditation. Among all nations, and in all countries devoted to the idolatry of women, there is a neceſſity of making them Roman ladies, or ſultanas; the middle way between theſe two is the moſt dangerous.

What I have ſaid above proves, that it is to the diverſity of governments, and conſequently to the intereſt of the people, that we muſt attribute the aſtoniſhing variety of their characters, genius, and taſte. If we imagine, that we ſometimes perceive a point to which the general eſteem radiates; if for example, the art of war is among almoſt all nations, conſidered as the principal; its is becauſe, a great general will be in a manner, every where conſidered as the moſt uſeful man, at leaſt, till the concluſion of an univerſal, and unalterable peace: but that peace being once confirmed, people will, without diſpute, give the men celebrated in the ſciences, laws, literature,

ture, and the polite arts, the preference to the greateſt generals upon earth: whence I conclude, that the general intereſt is, in every nation, the only diſpenſer of its eſteem.

It is to this cauſe, as I am going to prove, that we ought to attribute the unjuſt or rational, but always reciprocal contempt, which nations ſhew for their different manners, cuſtoms, and characters.

CHAP. XXI.

Of the reciprocal contempt of nations, proceeding from their vanity.

IT is with nations as with individuals: if every one of us believes himſelf infallible, places contradiction in the rank of offences, and can neither eſteem nor admire any thing in another, but what reſembles ſomething in himſelf; ſo every nation, in like manner, never eſteems in others, any ideas that are not analogous to its own, and every contrary opinion is a ſeed of contempt.

Let us caſt our eyes with rapidity over the univerſe: there are the Engliſh, who take us for giddy-headed mortals, while we ſay that their brains are diſordered. There is the Arab, who, perſuaded of the infallibility of his Khalif, laughs at the credulity of the Tartar, who believes the Great Lama immortal. In Africa is the negro, who, paying his adorations to a root, the claw of a lobſter, or the horn of an animal, ſees nothing on the earth but an immenſe maſs of Deities, and laughs at the ſcarcity of Gods among us; while the ill-informed muſſelman accuſes us with acknowledging three. Farther ſtill are the inhabitants of the mountain of Bata, who are perſuaded that every man who eats a roaſted cuckow before his death is a ſaint; they conſequently make a mock of the Indian. "What can be more ridiculous, ſay they, than to "bring a cow to the bed of the ſick; and to imagine, that if the cow whom "they draw along by the tail, happens to piſs, and ſome drops of her urine "fall upon the dying, this renders him a ſaint? What more abſurd in the "bramins, than to require of their new converts to eat no other food for "ſix months than cow's dung (a)."

The reciprocal contempt of nations is always founded on ſome difference of manners and cuſtoms. From this motive (b) the inhabitant of Antioch, formerly deſpiſed, in the emperor Julian, that ſimplicity of manners, and that

(a) "Theatre of idolatry, by Abraham Roger."

The cow, according to Vincent le Blanc, is reputed holy and venerable at Calicut. There is nothing that has in general a greater reputation for ſanctity: it ſeems that the cuſtom of eating cows dung by way of penance, is very antient in the Eaſt.

(b) One of the inhabitants of the Caribbee iſlands, offended at our contempt, cried out, "I know no other ſavages but the Europeans, "who adopt none of our cuſtoms." Of the origin and manners of the Caribbees, by La Borde.

frugality which juſtly obtained the admiration of the Gauls. The difference of religion, and conſequently of opinion, induced at the ſame time the chriſtians, more zealous than juſt, to blacken with the moſt infamous calumnies, the memory of a prince, who by diminiſhing the taxes, reſtoring military diſcipline, and reviving the expiring virtue of the Romans, ſo juſtly deſerved to be placed in the rank of the greateſt emperors (c).

If we caſt our eyes on all ſides, we ſee every place thus unjuſt. Each nation convinced, that ſhe is the ſole poſſeſſor of wiſdom, takes all others for fools; and nearly reſembles the inhabitants of the Marian iſlands (d), who, being perſuaded that theirs was the only language in the univerſe, concluded from thence, that all other men knew not how to ſpeak.

If a ſage deſcended from heaven, and in his conduct conſulted only the light of reaſon, he would univerſally paſs for a fool. He would be, as Socrates ſays, like a phyſician, whom the paſtry-cooks accuſed before a tribunal compoſed of children, for having prohibited the eating of pies and tarts; and would certainly be condemned. In vain would this ſage ſupport his opinions, by the ſtrongeſt demonſtrations; all the nations would be with reſpect to him, as the nation of hump-backed people, among whom, as the Indian fabuliſt ſay, came a God, beautiful, young, and well-proportioned. This God, they add, entered into the capital, where he was ſoon ſurrounded by a multitude of the inhabitants: his figure appeared extraordinary; their laughter and taunts declared their aſtoniſhment: and they were going to carry their affronts ſtill farther, if, to ſave him from danger, one of the inhabitants, who had doubtleſs ſeen other men that were not hump-backed, had not ſuddenly cried out, O my friends! what are we going to do? Let us not inſult this unhappy piece of deformity: if heaven has granted to us all the gifts of beauty; if it has adorned our backs with a mountain of fleſh, let us be filled with gratitude to the immortals, repair to the temple, and return thanks to the Gods. This fable is the hiſtory of human vanity. All people admire their own defects, and deſpiſe the contrary qualities. To ſucceed in any country, we muſt carry the hump of the nation into which we travel.

There are in every country but few advocates who plead the cauſe of the neighbouring nations; few men who acknowledge in themſelves the ridicule they caſt upon ſtrangers, and take example from I do not know what Tartar, who, on this ſubject, had the addreſs to make the Great Lama himſelf bluſh at his injuſtice.

This Tartar had travelled through the North, viſited the country of the Laplanders, and even purchaſed a wind of their ſorcerers (e). On his return to his native country, he related his adventures; and the Great Lama reſolving to hear him, was ready to burſt his ſides with laughing at his ſtory. Of what folly, cried he, is the human mind capable! What fantaſtic cuſtoms! How

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(c) There was engraven on the tomb of Julian at Tarſus, "Here lies Julian, who "loſt his life on the banks of the Tigris. He "was an excellent emperor, and a valiant "warrior."

(d) "Voyages of the Dutch Eaſt India company."

(e) The Laplanders have ſorcerers, who ſell to mariners, pieces of cord with knots tied at certain diſtances, which are to give them a favourable wind.

credulous

credulous are the Laplanders! Are theſe men? Yes indeed, replied the Tartar: I might inform you of ſomething even ſtill more ſurpriſing. Theſe Laplanders, with their ridiculous wizards, laugh no leſs at our credulity than thou doſt at theirs. Impious! cried the Great Lama, dareſt thou pronounce this blaſphemy, and compare my religion with theirs? Eternal Father, replied the Tartar, before the ſecret impoſition of thy hand on my head had waſhed me from my ſin, I would have repreſented that thou oughteſt not to have engaged thy ſubjects to make a profane uſe of their reaſon. If the ſevere eye of examination and doubt was ſpread over all the objects of human belief, who knows whether thy worſhip itſelf would be ſheltered from the raillery of the incredulous? Perhaps thy holy urine, and thy ſacred excrements, which thou doſt diſtribute in preſents to the princes of the earth, would appear leſs precious; perhaps they would not find they had ſtill the ſame ſavour (f): they would no longer put it powdered into their ragouts, nor any longer mix it in their ſauces. Already, in China, does impiety deny the nine incarnations of Viſthnou. Thou, whoſe penetrating view comprehends the paſt, the preſent, and the future, haſt often repeated it to us: it is to the taliſman of blind belief that thou oweſt thine immortality, and thy power on earth: without this entire ſubmiſſion to thy doctrines, thou wouldeſt be obliged to quit this aboad of darkneſs, and aſcend to heaven, thy native country. Thou knoweſt that the Lamas, ſubject to thy power, are one day to raiſe altars to thee in all the countries of the world. Who can aſſure thee, that they will execute this project, without the aſſiſtance of human credulity; and that without it, enquiry, which is always impious, will not take the Lamas for Lapland wizards, who ſell winds to the fools that buy them? Excuſe then, O living Fo, the diſcourſe dictated by my regard for thy worſhip; and may the Tartar learn of thee to reſpect the ignorance and credulity which heaven, ever impenetrable in its views, ſeems to ordain in order to make the earth ſubmit to thee.

Few men perceive the ridicule of their own nation, which they cover from the eye of reaſon, while under a foreign name, they laugh at their own folly: but there are ſtill fewer nations capable of improving by ſuch advice. All are ſo ſcrupulouſly attached to the intereſt of their own vanity, that in every country they give the title of wiſe only to thoſe who, as Fontenelle ſays, are the fools of the common folly. How fantaſtic ſoever a fable is, it is in ſome nations believed, and whoever doubts of its truth, is treated by that nation as a fool. In the kingdom of Juida, where they adore the ſerpent, what man dare deny the tale which the Marabouts tell of a hog, which, ſay they, inſulted the divinity of the ſerpent (g), and eat him up. An holy Marabout, they add, perceived it, and carried his complaints to the king. In an inſtant, ſentence of death was paſſed upon all the ſwine: the execution followed, and the whole race was going to be extirpated, when the people repreſented to his majeſty,

(f) They give the Grand Lama the name of Eternal Father. The princes are very greedy of his excrements. General hiſtory of voyages, tome vii.

(g) Voyages to Guinea and Cayen, by Father Labat.

that it was not juſt to puniſh ſo many innocent ſwine for one guilty hog. Theſe remonſtrances ſuſpended the prince's wrath: they appeaſed the grand Marabout, the maſſacre ceaſed, and the hogs were ordered to behave with more reſpect to the deity for the future. Thus, cry the Marabouts, the ſerpent, to be revenged on the impious, kindled the wrath of kings, that the whole univerſe might acknowledge his divinity, his temple, and his high prieſt, at the order of the Marabout appointed to ſerve him, and of the virgins conſecrated to his worſhip. If retired at the bottom of his ſanctuary, the ſerpent-god, inviſible to the ſight even of the king himſelf, receives not his queſtions, and makes no anſwer to his requeſts, but by the mouth of the prieſt; it is not for mortals to pry into theſe myſteries with a profane eye: their duty is to believe, to proſtrate themſelves, and adore.

In Aſia, on the contrary, when the Perſians (h), ſtained, with the blood of the ſerpents ſacrificed to the God of goodneſs, ran to the temple of the Magi, to boaſt of this act of piety; can it be thought, that if a man had ſtopped them in order to prove the ridiculouſneſs of their opinion, he would have been well received? The more fooliſh an opinion is, the more it is praiſe-worthy, and the more dangerous it is to prove its folly.

Thus, Fontenelle was accuſtomed to ſay, that "If he held every truth in his hand, he would take great care not to open it to ſhew them to men." In fact, if the diſcovery of one truth alone, even in Europe, threw Galileo into the priſons of the inquiſition, to what puniſhment would he be condemned who revealed them all (i)?

Among the rational part of my readers, who at this inſtant laugh at the folly of the human mind, and are filled with indignation at the treatment of Galileo, perhaps there is not one, who in the age of that philoſopher, would not have ſolicited for his death. They would then have been of different ſentiments, and in what cruelties are we involved when barbarity and fanaticiſm are united to our opinions? How has this union deluged the earth with the moſt dreadful evils! and yet it is an union that it muſt be equally juſt, uſeful, and eaſy to diſſolve.

In order to learn to doubt of our opinions, it is ſufficient that we examine the powers of our minds, conſider the picture of human follies, and recollect that ſix hundred years after the eſtabliſhment of univerſities, there aroſe an extraordinary man (k), who was perſecuted by the age in which he lived, and at length placed in the rank of demigods, for having taught men to admit nothing for truth of which they had not clear ideas: few men were capable of knowing the extent of this principle, for among the greateſt part of mankind principles include no conſequences.

However great the vanity of mankind may be, it is certain that if they frequently call to mind ſuch facts; if, like Fontenelle, they often ſay to themſelves,

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(h) Beauſobre's hiſtory of Manicheiſm.

(i) To think, ſays Ariſtippus, is to draw upon ourſelves the irreconcilable hatred of the ignorant, the weak, the ſuperſtitious, and the corrupt, who all loudly declare themſelves againſt thoſe who would take hold of truth, and in every thing ſeize whatever is eſſentially neceſſary to be known.

(k) Deſcartes.

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"Nobody escapes from error, and am I alone infallible? may I not be deceiv-
"ed in those very things which I maintain with the greatest fanaticism?" If men had this idea habitually present to their minds, they would be more on their guard against vanity, more attentive to the objections of their adversaries, and better prepared to perceive the force of truth: they would be more mild; more enclined to toleration, and doubtless would have a less high opinion of their own wisdom. Socrates frequently repeated, "All that I know
"is, that I know nothing." In our age we know every thing except what Socrates knew. Men would not be so often surprised into error, were it not for their ignorance; and their folly is in general the more incurable, from their believing themselves wise.

This folly, which is common to all nations, and is in part produced by their vanity, makes them not only despise the manners and customs that are different from their own, but makes them also regard as a gift of nature that superiority which some of them have over others: a superiority that is solely owing to the political constitution of their nation.

CHAP. XXII.

Why nations consider as gifts of nature the qualities solely owing to the form of their government.

THIS error is likewise founded on vanity, and what nation can triumph in such an error? Let us suppose, for example, that a Frenchman, accustomed to speak freely, and here and there to converse with some good citizens, leaves Paris, and lands at Constantinople; what idea would he form of a country subject to despotic power, on his considering the disgrace to which he saw human nature reduced? On his every where perceiving the print of slavery? On his seeing tyranny infect, with her pestilential breath, the buds of every talent and every virtue; spreading stupidity, servile fear, and depopulation from Caucasus to Egypt? And in short, on his being informed, that the tranquil Sultan, who is shut up in his seraglio, while the Persian defeats his troops and ravages his provinces, unmoved by the public calamities, drinks his sherbet, caresses his women, causes his bashaws to be strangled, and is wearied with his indolence? Struck with the cowardice and slavery of these people, and at once animated by the sensations of pride and indignation, what Frenchman would not think himself of a superior nature to a Turk? Are there many who are sensible, that contempt for a whole nation is always unjust? That the superiority of one country over another depends on the greater or lesser happiness of their forms of government? and that in fine, a Turk might make him the same answer that was made by a Persian to a Spartan soldier, who reproached him with the cowardice of his country, Why do you insult me? said he. This is the case of every nation that acknowledges

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an abſolute maſter. A king is the univerſal ſoul of a deſpotic ſtate; and it is his courage or weakneſs that cauſes this empire to revive or to languiſh. If we were conquerors under Cyrus, and are now vanquiſhed under Xerxes, it is becauſe Cyrus was the founder of the throne on which Xerxes was ſeated by his birth; it is becauſe Cyrus when born, had his equals; becauſe Xerxes was always ſurrounded by ſlaves; and thou knoweſt that the vileſt of theſe inhabit the palaces of kings. It is then the dregs of the nation thou ſeeſt inveſted with the firſt employments; it is the foam of the ſea, which riſes on its ſurface. Acknowledge the injuſtice of thy contempt; but if thou art ſtill in doubt, give us the laws of Sparta, and take Xerxes for thy maſter: thou wilt then be the ſlave, and I the hero.

Let us now call to mind the time when the cry of war had awakened all the nations of Europe, and its thunder was heard from the north to the ſouth of France (1). Suppoſe that at this time a republican, animated by the ſpirit of liberty, arrived at Paris, and entered into the beſt company, how would he be ſurpriſed at ſeeing every one there treat public affairs with indifference, and warmly employ themſelves about nothing but the faſhion, a novel or a little dog!

Struck with the difference, that in this reſpect would be viſible between our nation and his own, there is ſcarcely an Engliſhman who would not believe himſelf to be a Being of a ſuperior nature; who would not take the French for a giddy-brained trifling people, and France for the kingdom of baubles: not but that he might eaſily perceive, that his fellow-countrymen owe their ſpirit of patriotiſm, and the elevation unknown to all but free countries, not merely to the form of their government, but to the ſituation of England.

In fact, to be ſenſible that this liberty of which the Engliſh are ſo proud, and that really includes ſo many virtues, is leſs the reward of their courage than the gift of fortune, let us conſider the infinite number of factions that have hitherto divided England; and we ſhall be convinced, that if the ſea, by embracing that empire, had not rendered it inacceſſible to the neighbouring nations, they would, by taking advantage of the diviſions in England, either have ſubdued them, or at leaſt have furniſhed their kings with the means of bringing them into ſubjection; and that therefore their liberty is not the fruit of their wiſdom. If, as they pretend, it only depends on a firmneſs and prudence peculiar to their nation; after the frightful crime committed on the perſon of Charles I. would they not at leaſt have drawn all advantages they might have reaped from it? Would they have ſuffered that, by public ſervices and proceſſions, a prince ſhould be placed in the rank of martyrs, whom it was their intereſt, ſay ſome of them, to have conſidered as a victim ſacrificed to the public welfare, and whoſe puniſhment was neceſſary to ſet an example to the world, and ought for ever to terrify any prince who ſhould endeavour to make the people ſubmit to an arbitrary and tyrannical authority? All the ſenſible part of England muſt then be convinced, that its government in its preſent form could not ſubſiſt on the continent, without great improvements; and that the only ſubject of their pride is reduced to the happineſs of being born in an iſland, rather than on the continent.

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(1) In the laſt war, when the enemy entered Provence.

A particular perſon may any where make a confeſſion of this kind; but never the public. Never does a nation ſubmit its vanity to the ſhackles of reaſon: more equity in its judgments would ſuppoſe a ſuſpenſion of vanity, too ſeldom to be found in a ſingle perſon ever to appear in a whole nation.

Each country therefore always places among the gifts of nature, the virtues derived from the form of its government. Its vanity is influenced by the counſels of intereſt; and who can reſiſt the counſel of intereſt?

The general concluſion of what I have ſaid on the mind, conſidered in relation to various countries, is, that intereſt is the only diſpenſer of the eſteem or contempt which nations feel for their different manners, cuſtoms, and turns of mind.

The only objection that can be brought againſt the above concluſion is this: If intereſt, ſay they, be the only diſpenſer of the eſteem granted to different kinds of genius and learning, why is morality, though of uſe to all nations, no more honoured? Why are the names of Deſcartes and Newton, more celebrated than thoſe of Nicole, La Bruyere, and all the other moraliſts, who, perhaps, in their works gave as great a proof of genius? It is, I reply, becauſe great natural philoſophers have, by their diſcoveries, been ſometimes of uſe to the whole human race, while moſt moraliſts have hitherto been of no ſervice to mankind. To what purpoſe is it to repeat inceſſantly, that it is noble to die for one's country? An apothegm never makes an hero. To merit eſteem, moraliſts ought to ſearch for the proper means of forming brave and virtuous men; and thus employ that time and thoſe abilities they have loſt, in compoſing maxims of virtue. When Omar wrote to the Syrians, "I ſend againſt you "men as greedy of death, as ye are of pleaſures;" the Saracens, deceived by the deluſions of ambition and credulity, conſidered heaven as the reward of valour and victory, and hell, as the puniſhment of cowardice and a defeat. They were then animated with the moſt violent fanaticiſm; and theſe paſſions, not maxims of morality, form courageous men. The moraliſts ought to be ſenſible of this; and to know, that, like a ſtatuary, who, from the trunk of a tree, can make a God or a bench: the legiſlator forms at his pleaſure, heroes, great geniuſes, and virtuous men. I call for witneſs the Moſcovites, transformed into men by Peter the Great.

In vain do the people, fooliſhly enamoured with their own government, ſeek for the cauſe of their misfortunes in the laws not being put in execution. The non-performance of the laws, ſays the ſultan Mahmouth, is always a proof of the ignorance of the legiſlator. Reward, puniſhment, glory, and infamy, ſubject to his will, are four divinities, with which he can always promote the public welfare, and create illuſtrious men of all kinds.

The whole ſtudy of the moraliſts conſiſts in determining the uſe that ought to be made of theſe rewards and puniſhments, and the aſſiſtance that may be drawn from them in order to connect the perſonal with the general intereſt. This union is the maſter-piece which moraliſts ought to propoſe to themſelves. If citizens could not procure their own private happineſs without promoting that of the public, there would then be none vicious but fools. All men would be under the neceſſity of being virtuous; and the felicity of nations would be of benefit to morality: now, who doubts but, on that ſuppoſition, this ſcience would be greatly honoured, and that the excellent writers of this

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kind would, at leaſt by an equitable and grateful poſterity, be placed in the ſame rank with Solon, Lycurgus, and Confucius?

But, it is replied, that the imperfection of morality, and the ſlowneſs of its progreſs, can be only an effect of the ſmall proportion to be found between the eſteem granted to moraliſts, and the efforts of mind neceſſary to carry that ſcience to perfection: therefore the general intereſt, they add, is not conſidered in the diſtribution of the public eſteem?

In reply to this objection, we muſt ſearch for the unſurmountable obſtacles that have hitherto oppoſed the advancement of morality, among the cauſes of that indifference with which people have conſidered a ſcience, the improvement whereof muſt always be accompanied with that of the legiſlation, and conſequently it is for the intereſt of every nation to bring it to perfection.

CHAP. XXIII.

Of the cauſes that have hitherto retarded the progreſs of morality.

IF poetry, geometry, aſtronomy, and, in general, all the ſciences advance more or leſs rapidly towards perfection, while morality ſeems ſcarcely to have left its cradle; it is becauſe men being forced to unite in ſociety, and to give themſelves laws, were obliged to form a ſyſtem of morality before they had learnt from obſervation its true principles. The ſyſtem being formed, no farther notice was taken of it; thus, we have in a manner the morals of the world in its infancy, and how ſhall it be brought to perfection?

The progreſs of a ſcience does not ſolely depend on its being of uſe to the public: every citizen of which a nation is compoſed ought to reap ſome advantage from its improvement. Now in the revolutions that have taken place among all the nations of the earth, the public intereſt, which is that of the majority, among whom the principles of ſound morality ought to find its ſupport, not being always agreeable to the intereſt of thoſe moſt in power; the latter being indifferent with reſpect to the progreſs of all ſciences, muſt effectually oppoſe that of morality.

The ambitious man, who is raiſed above his fellow-citizens; the tyrant who tramples them under his feet; and the fanatic, who keeps them proſtrate; all theſe ſeveral ſcourges of the human race, all theſe different kinds of flagitious men, forced by their private intereſt, to eſtabliſh laws contrary to the general good, have been very ſenſible, that their power had no other foundation, than the ignorance and weakneſs of mankind: they have therefore impoſed ſilence on whoſoever, by diſcovering to the people the true principles of morality, would have opened their eyes with reſpect to their misfortunes and their rights, and have armed them againſt injuſtice.

But, it is replied, if in the firſt ages of the world, when deſpotic princes held the nations in ſubjection, and ruled them with a rod of iron, it was then their intereſt to conceal from the people the true principles of morality; principles, which by animating them againſt tyrants, would have made revenge the duty of

of each citizen: yet now, when the ſceptre is not purchaſed with guilt, but placed by unanimous conſent, in the hand of a prince, and ſupported by the love of the people; when the glory and happineſs of a nation, reflecting on the ſovereign, adds to his grandeur and felicity; what enemies of the human race are there ſtill to oppoſe the progreſs of morality?

This is no longer done by kings, but by two other ſorts of men in power. The firſt are the fanatics, whom I ſhall not confound with the men truly pious. Theſe laſt ſupport the maxims of religion, and the others are their deſtroyers: the one are the friends of humanity (a); the other who are outwardly mild, but within barbarous, have the voice of Jacob and the hands of Eſau: they are indifferent with reſpect to worthy actions; they judge virtuous not what is done but what is believed; and the credulity of men is, according to them, the only ſtandard of their probity (b). They mortally hate, ſaid queen Chriſtina, all who are not their dupes; and to this they are led by their intereſt. Being ambitious, hypocritical, and artful, they imagine that, to inſlave the people, they ought to put out their eyes: thus, theſe impious wretches are inceſſantly ſetting up the cry of impiety againſt every man born to enlighten the nations: every new truth is ſuſpected by them; and they reſemble infants that are terrified at every thing in the dark.

The ſecond ſpecies of men in power who oppoſe the progreſs of morality are the half politicians. Among theſe are ſome naturally diſpoſed to truth, who are enemies to newly diſcovered truths, only from their indolence, and their being unwilling to apply the attention neceſſary to examine them. There are others animated by dangerous motives, and theſe are moſt to be feared. Theſe are the men whoſe minds are without abilities, and whoſe ſouls are deſtitute of virtues; they want not the courage of being greatly wicked; and incapable of new and elevated views, they believe that their importance demands a week or diſſembled reſpect for all the received opinions and errors countenanced by them. Furious againſt every man who would ſtagger the empire, they arm (c) againſt him even thoſe paſſions and prejudices which they deſpiſe; and, without ceaſing, terrify weak minds with the cry of novelty.

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(a) They freely ſay to the perſecutors, what the Scythians ſaid to Alexander, "Thou "art not then a God ſince thou doſt evil to "men." As the chriſtians exclaimed againſt Saturn or the Moloch of the Carthaginians, to whom men were offered in ſacrifice, that ſuch a religion was a proof of its falſhood, how often have our fanatical prieſts given room to the heretics to retort this argument againſt them? How many prieſts of Moloch are there among us?

(b) Thus they have all the reluctance in the world againſt acknowledgnig the probity of an heretic.

(c) Intereſt is always the concealed motive of perſecution. There is no doubt but a want of toleration is an evil contrary to Chriſtianity and ſound politics: but it would be none to repent of the revocation of the edict of Nants. Theſe diſputes, ſay they, are dangerous. They are ſo when authority takes a part in them: then the want of toleration in one party ſometimes forces the other to take up arms. When the magiſtrates do not interfere, the divines, after abuſing each other, come to an accommodation. This fact is proved by the peace enjoyed in the countries where toleration is allowed. But this toleration, they reply, though it be agreeable to certain governments, would be perhaps fatal to ours. Are not the Turks, whoſe religion is a religion of blood, and

As if all truths baniſh virtue from the earth, and every thing relating to them was of ſuch advantage to vice, that we cannot be virtuous without being void of underſtanding; as if morality ſhewed the neceſſity of it, and as if the ſtudy of that ſcience conſequently became fatal to the univerſe; they are reſolved, that the people ſhall be kept as proſtrate before the received prejudices, as before the ſacred crocodile of Memphis. Does any perſon make a diſcovery in morality? It is to us alone, ſay they, that it ought to be revealed: we alone, after the example of thoſe who were initiated into the ſacred myſteries of Egypt, ought to be the depoſitories of them: the reſt of the human race ſhould be involved in the darkneſs of prejudice; for the natural ſtate of man is blindneſs.

Like thoſe phyſicians, who jealous of the diſcovery of emetics, abuſed the credulity of ſome prelates, by engaging them to excommunicate a remedy whoſe aſſiſtance was ſo ſpeedy and ſo ſalutary, they impoſe upon the credulity

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whoſe government is tyranny, leſs averſe to toleration than we? We ſee churches at Conſtantinople, but there are no moſques at Paris: they do not put the Greeks to the torture, on account of their creed, and yet their toleration does not kindle the flames of war.

To conſider it as a chriſtian, it is a crime. The goſpel, the apoſtles, and fathers, almoſt conſtantly preach of mildneſs and toleration. St. Paul and St. Chyſoſtom ſay, that a biſhop ought to gain men by perſuaſion, not by conſtraint. Biſhops, they add, ſhould only have authority over thoſe who ſubmit to their power; but inſtead of this they are kings, who reign over thoſe who could not ſubmit to their dominion.

In the Eaſt, the council was condemned that conſented to have Bogomilus burnt.

What an example of moderation did St. Baſil give in the fourth century, when the queſtion relating to the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt was debated? a queſtion that occaſioned much diſturbance. That ſaint, ſays St. Gregory de Nazianzen, though firmly perſuaded of the truth of the doctrine of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, conſented, that the title of God ſhould not be given to the third perſon in the trinity.

Though this wiſe condeſcenſion was, according to M. de Tillemont, condemned by ſome angry zealots; and though St. Baſil was accuſed of betraying the truth by his ſilence, that very condeſcenſion was approved by the moſt celebrated and moſt pious men of that time, and among others, by the great St. Athanaſius, who cannot be ſuſpected of wanting firmneſs.

This fact is related in M. de Tillemont's Life of St. Baſil, art. 63, 64, and 65. That author adds, that the Œcumenic council of Conſtantinople approved St. Baſil's conduct, by imitating it.

St. Auguſtin ſays, that we ought neither to condemn nor puniſh him who has not the ſame idea of God as we have: at leaſt, ſays he, if it is not through hatred to God, which is impoſſible. St. Athanaſius, in his epiſtles ad Solitarios, lib. I. page 855, ſays, that the perſecutions of the Arians are a proof that they have neither piety nor the fear of God. The property of piety, adds he, is to perſuade and not to conſtrain; we ought to take example from our Saviour, who left every one the liberty of following him. He before ſays, page 830, that the devil, the father of lies, has need of hatchets and axes to cauſe his opinions to be embraced; but our Saviour is mildneſs itſelf. He knocks; if we open, he enters; if we refuſe him, he retires. It is not with ſwords, javelins, priſons, ſoldiers, and arms in our hands, that we teach the truth, but by the voice of perſuaſion.

People have really recourſe to force only for want of arguments. If a man denies that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, he is laughed at, but not perſecuted: but fire and gibbets are often uſed as arguments by divines, who have in this reſpect given heretics and unbelievers the advantage over them. Jeſus Chriſt did no violence to any man. He only ſaid, Follow thou me: but intereſt has not always permitted his miniſters to imitate his moderation.

of honeſt men, who are, however, ſo ſtupid, that under a government leſs wiſe, they would drag to puniſhment a man with the integrity and underſtanding of a Socrates.

Such are the means employed by theſe two kinds of men, to impoſe ſilence on thoſe enlightened by knowledge. In vain would they endeavour to reſiſt them by leaning on the favour of the public. When a citizen is animated by a love of truth and the general welfare, I am ſenſible that he will always diffuſe through his work the perfume of truth, which will render it agreeable to the public, who will become his protector. But as when under the buckler of gratitude and the public eſteem, they are not ſecure from the perſecution of thoſe fanatics, there are very few among the wiſe ſo virtuous, as to dare to brave their fury.

Theſe are the unſurmountable obſtacles that have hitherto oppoſed the progreſs of morality; and the reaſons why that ſcience is almoſt always uſeleſs, and in conſequence of my principles, ſtill deſerves little eſteem.

But may we not make the nations ſenſible of the advantages they would obtain from an excellent ſyſtem of morality? and might we not haſten the progreſs of that ſcience, by conferring greater honours on thoſe who improve it? Conſidering the importance of this ſubject, I ſhall run the hazard of a digreſſion, in order to treat it more fully.

CHAP. XXIV.

Of the means of perfecting Morality.

IT would be ſufficient for this purpoſe to remove the obſtacles placed againſt its progreſs by the two kinds of men I have mentioned. The only means of ſucceeding in this, is to pull off their maſks, and to ſhew that the protectors of ignorance are the moſt cruel enemies of human beings; to ſhew the nations, that men are in general more ſtupid than wicked; that in curing them of their errors we ſhould cure them of moſt of their vices; and that oppoſing their cure is committing the crime of treaſon againſt human nature.

Every man who conſiders the picture of public miſeries exhibited in hiſtory, ſoon perceives that ignorance, which is ſtill more barbarous than ſelf-love, has cauſed moſt of the calamities that have overflowed the earth. Struck with this truth, we are ready to cry out, Happy the nation where the citizens are permitted to perpetrate only the crimes that flow from ſelf-love! How are they multiplied by ignorance, and what blood has been ſpilt on its altars (a)? However,

(a) A king of Mexico, on the conſecration of a temple, cauſed ſix thouſand four hundred and eight men to be ſacrificed in four days, Gemelli Carreri, vol. vi. pag. 56.

In India, the Brachmans of the ſchool of Niagam, taking advantage of the favour of the princes, maſſacred the Baudhiſts in ſeveral kingdoms. Theſe Baudhiſts are atheiſts, and the others deiſts. Balta was the prince who cauſed moſt blood to be ſpilt. To purify himſelf from this crime, he afterwards burnt himſelf with great ſolemnity on the coaſt of Oricha.

ever, man is made to be virtuous; and in fact, if force eſſentially reſides in the greater number, and juſtice conſiſts in the practice of actions uſeful to the greater number, it is evident that juſtice is in its own nature always armed with a power ſufficient to ſuppreſs vice, and place men under the neceſſity of being virtuous.

If audacious and powerful wickedneſs ſo often puts juſtice and virtue in chains, and oppreſſes the nations, this is only done by the aſſiſtance of ignorance, which conceals from every nation its true intereſt, hinders the action and union of its ſtrength, and by that means, ſhields the guilty from the ſword of juſtice.

To what contempt ought he to be cendemned who would hold the people in the darkneſs of ignorance? This truth has not hitherto been inſiſted upon with ſufficient force; no, all the altars of error muſt one day be overthrown. I know with what precaution we ought to advance a new opinion. I know, that in deſtroying prejudices, we ought to treat them with reſpect; and that before we attack an error generally received, we ought to ſend, like the doves from the ark, ſome truths on the diſcovery, to ſee if the deluge of prejudices does not yet cover the face of the earth; if error begins to ſubſide, and if there can be perceived here and there ſome iſles, where virtue and truth may find reſt for their feet, and communicate themſelves to mankind.

But ſo many precautions are only to be taken with thoſe prejudices that are not very dangerous. What reſpect do we owe to the man, who, jealous of dominion, would beſot the people, in order to tyrannize over them? We muſt with a bold hand break the taliſman of imbecility, to which is attached the power of theſe malevolent genii; to diſcover to nations the true principles of morality; to teach them that being inſenſibly drawn towards happineſs, either apparent or real, grief and pleaſure are the only movers of the moral univerſe; and that the ſenſation of ſelf-love is the only baſis on which we can place the foundations of an uſeful morality.

How can they flatter themſelves with concealing from men the knowledge of this principle? In order to ſucceed in it, they muſt forbid their penetrating into their own hearts, examining their conduct, opening thoſe hiſtorical works where they perceive men in all ages and in all countries, ſolely attentive to the voice of pleaſure, ſacrifice human beings like themſelves, I will not ſay to great

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cha. It is obſervable, that thoſe were deiſts who cauſed ſuch a torrent of human blood to be ſpilt. See the letters of father Pons, the Jeſuit.

The prieſts of Meroe in Ethiopia diſpatched, whenever they pleaſed, a courier to the king to order him to die. See Diodorus.

Whoever kills the king of Sumatra is elected king in his room. By ſuch an aſſaſſination, ſay the people, heaven declares its will. Chardin obſerves, that he heard a preacher, who was declaiming againſt the Sophis, ſay, that they were atheiſts, and deſerved to be burnt; that he was aſtoniſhed they ſhould be ſuffered to live; and that the killing a Sophi was an action more pleaſing to God than the preſervation of the lives of ten worthy men. How often has the ſame manner of reaſoning been uſed among us!

It was doubtleſs from the view of ſo much blood ſpilt by fanaticiſm, that the abbe Longuerue, who is profoundly verſed in hiſtory, ſays, that if we were to put into two ſcales the good and the evil done by religion, the evil would preponderate, vol. i. pag. 11.

"Take not a houſe, ſays a Perſian proverb, "alluding to this ſubject, in a quarter where "the lower people are ignorant and devout.

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and important intereſts, but to their ſenſuality and amuſement. I take to witneſs thoſe fiſh-ponds where the barbarous gluttony of the Romans drowned the ſlaves, and gave them as food to their fiſhes, in order to render them more delicate eating; that iſle of Tiber, whither the cruelty of the maſters tranſported their old, infirm, and ſick ſlaves, and left them to periſh, by the torments of hunger: I alſo call to witneſs, the ruins of thoſe vaſt and ſuperb amphitheatres, where the moſt polite people in the univerſe ſacrificed thouſands of gladiators to the mere pleaſure that aroſe from beholding their combats; where the women ran in crowds; where the tender ſex, nouriſhed in luxury, ſoftneſs, and pleaſure, that ſex made for the ornament and delight of the world, who ſeemed, as if made to breathe only voluptuous endearments, carried their barbarity ſo far, as to deſire the wounded gladiators to fall, when dying, in an agreeable attitude. Theſe facts, and a thouſand others of the like kind, are too well atteſted for them to flatter themſelves with concealing their true cauſe from men. Every one knows, that he is not of a different nature from the Romans; that the difference of his education produces the difference of his ſentiments, and from thence he is ſhocked at the bare recital of a ſpectacle which cuſtom would doubtleſs have rendered agreeable, had he been born on the banks of the Tiber. In vain do ſome men, the dupes of their lazineſs in examining, and of their vanity in thinking too well of themſelves, imagine, that they owe the ſentiments of humanity with which they would be affected at ſuch a ſpectacle to the particular excellence of their nature: the ſenſible man agrees, that nature, as Paſcal ſays (b), and as experience proves, is nothing but our firſt habit. It is therefore abſurd to conceal from men the principle by which they are actuated.

But ſuppoſing they could ſucceed in this, what advantage would mankind receive from it? They would certainly only veil from the eyes of men of groſs ideas the ſenſation of ſelf-love. They would not hinder their being actuated by this ſenſation; nor would they change its effects: men would not be any other than they are, therefore this ignorance would be of no uſe to them. I proceed ſtill farther, and ſay, it would be prejudicial. It is, in fact, to a conſciouſneſs of our being actuated by ſelf-love, that ſociety owes moſt of the advantages it enjoys: this conſciouſneſs, imperfect as it ſtill is, has informed mankind of the neceſſity of arming the hand of magiſtrates with power; and has made the legiſlator obtain a confuſed idea of the neceſſity of founding the principles of probity on the baſis of perſonal intereſt. Indeed upon what other baſis could they reſt it? Could it be placed on the principles of thoſe falſe religions, which, notwithſtanding their errors, it is ſaid, might be rendered ſubſervient to the temporal happineſs of mankind (c)? But moſt of theſe are too abſurd to ſerve as ſupports to virtue; neither could it be reſted on the principles of the true religion. Indeed the morals of this religion are excellent; its maxims elevate the ſoul, fill it with an inward joy, and give it a foretaſte of the tranſports of heaven; but theſe principles would only be ſuited to a ſmall number of chriſtians diſperſed over the earth; and a philoſopher, who,

(b) Sextus Empiricus, ſaid before him, That our natural principles are perhaps nothing more than our cuſtomary principles.

(c) Cicero did not think ſo; for, notwithſtanding his being a place-man, as he really was, he thought it his duty to ſhew the people the abſurdity of the Pagan religion.

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in his writings, is always ſuppoſed to be ſpeaking to the univerſe, ought to give virtue a foundation on which all nations may equally build, and conſequently erect it on the baſis of perſonal intereſt. He ſhould the more cloſely adhere to this principle, as the motions of temporal intereſt, managed with addreſs by a ſkilful legiſlator, are alone ſufficient to form virtuous men. The example of the Turks, who admit into their religion the doctrine of neceſſity, a principle deſtructive to all religion, and may conſequently be conſidered as deiſts; the example of the Chineſe materaliſts (d); that of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the ſoul, and yet received from the Jews the title of the Juſt, by way of excellence; in fine, the example of the Gymnoſophiſts, who, notwithſtanding their being conſtantly accuſed of atheiſm, were always reſpected for their wiſdom and gravity, diſcharged the duties of ſociety with the utmoſt exactneſs: all theſe examples, and a thouſand others of the like kind, prove, that the hope or fear of temporal rewards and puniſhments, are as efficacious, and as proper to form virtuous men as thoſe pleaſures and pains that are eternal, which being conſidered in the perſpective of futurity, commonly make too weak an impreſſion to engage men to ſacrifice to them their preſent criminal pleaſures.

Why ſhould they not give the preference to motives of temporal intereſt? They inſpire none of thoſe pious and holy cruelties, condemned by our religion(e), that law of love and humanity; but which its miniſters have ſo often uſed: cruelties that will for ever be the diſgrace of former ages, and the horror and aſtoniſhment of the future.

With what ſurprize ought the virtuous citizen, and the chriſtian, filled with that ſpirit of charity ſo often recommended in the Goſpel, to be ſeized, when he caſts his eye upon the paſt ages of the world! He there ſees different religions invoke all the rage of fanaticiſm, and glut themſelves with human blood (f).

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(d) Father le Compte, and moſt of the Jeſuits agree, that all the men of letters are atheiſts. The celebrated abbé Longuerue is of the ſame opinion.

(e) When Bayle ſaid, that religion, which in the firſt ages, was humble, patient, and beneficent, is ſince become ambitious and ſanguinary; ſince it puts to the ſword whoever reſiſts it; ſince it calls for tormentors, invents new kinds of torture, ſends bulls to excite the people to revolt, forms conſpiracies, and, in fine, orders the murder of princes, he miſtook the work of man for that of religion; and chriſtians have too often been theſe men. When they are only a ſmall number, they pleaded for toleration; but their number and credit being encreaſed, they preached againſt it. Bellarmine ſaid, on this ſubject, that if the chriſtians did not dethrone Nero and Dioclesian, it was not becauſe they had not a right to do it, but becauſe they were not ſtrong enough: and it muſt be confeſſed, that they made uſe of their ſtrength as ſoon as they were able. The emperors deſtroyed paganiſm with arms in their hand; and thus by fighting againſt hereſies, preached the Goſpel to the Frieſlanders, the Saxons, and throughout all the North.

All theſe facts prove, that the principles of our holy religion have been but too often abuſed.

(f) In the infancy of the world, the firſt uſe man made of his reaſon was to perſuade himſelf, that the Gods were cruel. They thought of rendering the Gods propitious by the effuſion of human blood; and in the quivering entrails of the vanquiſhed, they ſtrove to read the decrees of fate. After the German had with the moſt horrible imprecations devoted his enemies to death, his heart was

There the different ſects of chriſtians exaſperated againſt each other, tear in pieces the empire of Conſtantinople: farther ſtill ariſes in Arabia a new religion, which commands the Saracens, to lay waſte the earth with fire and ſword. The irruption of theſe barbarians is ſucceeded by a war againſt the infidels. Under the ſtandard of the croſs entire nations deſert Europe, and ſpread like an inundation over Aſia; they commit on the road the moſt baſe and ſcandalous robberies, and are buried in the ſands of Arabia and Egypt. At length fanaticiſm arms afreſh the hand of chriſtian princes, and orders the catholics to maſſacre the heretics: then again appears on the earth the tortures invented by the Phalariſes, the Buſiriſes and the Neros; it prepares, it kindles in Spain, the flaming pile of the inquiſition; while the pious Spaniards, leave their ports, and traverſe the ſeas, to plant the croſs and deſolation in America (g). If we caſt our eyes to the north, the ſouth, the eaſt, and the weſt, we every where ſee the ſacred knife of religion held up to the breaſts of women, children, and old men; the earth ſmoaking with the blood of victims ſacrificed to the falſe Gods, or to the Supreme Being; every place offers nothing to the ſight but the vaſt, the horrible carnage, cauſed by a want of toleration. What virtuous man, and what chriſtian, if his tender mind is filled with the divine love, that exhales from the maxims of the Goſpel, if he is capable of feeling the complaints of the miſerable, and if he has ſometimes dried up their tears, would not at this ſight be touched with compaſſion for human nature (h), and endeavour to found probity, not on principles ſo venerable as thoſe of religion, but on thoſe that cannot be ſo eaſily abuſed, ſuch as the motives of perſonal intereſt?

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no longer open to pity; commiſeration appeared to him as ſacrilege.

To calm the reſentment of the Nereides, a polite people faſtened Andromeda to a rock; to appeaſe Diana, and open a way to the city of Troy, Agamemnon himſelf dragged Iphigenia to the altar, Calchas ſtruck the blow, and believed that he did honour to the Gods.

(g) Thus in an epiſtle ſuppoſed to be addreſſed to Charles V. an American is repreſented ſpeaking thus:

------Le n'eſt point nous qui ſommes les barbares:
Ce ſont, ſeigneur, ce ſont vos Cortez, vos Pizarres,
Qui pour nous mettre au fait d'un ſyſtéme nouveau,
Aſſemblent, contre nous, le prêtre & le bourreau.

That is,

It is not we who are barbarians:
Theſe, my lord, are your Cortezes, your Pizarroes,
Who to oblige us to receive a new religion,
Aſſemble againſt us prieſts and executioners.

(h) On account of this perſecution, Themiſtius the ſenator, in a letter addreſſed to the emperor Valens, ſays, "Is it a crime to "think differently from thee? If the chriſ- "tians are divided among themſelves, the "philoſophers are no leſs ſo. Truth has an "infinite number of faces, by which ſhe "may be ſeen. God has engraven in all "hearts a reſpect for his attributes; but eve- "ry one has the liberty of ſhewing that reſ-

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Theſe motives, without contradicting the principles of our religion, would be ſufficient, to lay men under a neceſſity of being virtuous. The Pagan religion, by peopling Olympus with villians, was doubtleſs leſs adapted than ours to form juſt men: who, however, can doubt that the firſt Romans were more virtuous than we? Who can deny, that priſons have diſarmed more robbers than religion? That the Italian, more devout than the French, has not with his chaplet of beads in his hand uſed the ſtilletto and poiſon? And that at the time when devotion was warmer, and policy more imperfect, they did not commit infinitely more crimes (i) than in the ages when devotion grew cool, and policy was carried to perfection?

It is then only by good laws (k) that we can form virtuous men. All the art therefore of the legiſlator conſiſts in forcing them by ſelf-love to be always juſt

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"pect in the manner he thinks moſt agreeable to the deity; and no one here has a "right ro prevent him."

St. Gregory de Nazienzen had a great eſteem for Themiſtius, to whom he wrote, "Thou alone, O Themiſtius, ſtruggleſt "againſt the decline of literature: thou art "at the head of the learned; thou canſt philoſophize in high employments, join "ſtudy to power, and dignities to ſcience."

(i) There are few men reſtrained by religion. What crimes have been committed even by thoſe intruſted to guide us in the ways of ſalvation, St. Bartholomew's day, the aſſaſſination of Henry IV. the maſſacre of the Templars, &c. &c. &c. ſufficiently prove.

(k) Euſebius, in his Evangelical preparation, lib. vi. cap. 10. mentions this remarkable fragment of a Syrian philoſopher, named Bardezanes: "Apud Seras, lex eſt qua cædes, ſcortatio, furtum & ſimulachrorum cultus omnis prohibetur; quare in ampliſſima regione, non templum videas, non lenam, non meretricem, non adulteram, non furem in jus raptum, non homicidam, non toxicum." "Among the Seres, the law prohibits murder, fornication, robbery, and all kinds "of religious worſhip; ſo that in this vaſt "region we ſee neither temple, nor adultery, "nor bawds, nor whores, nor robbers, nor "aſſaſſins, nor priſoners." A proof that the laws are ſufficient to reſtrain men.

We ſhould never have done, were we to attempt giving a liſt of all the people who, without the idea of a God, live in ſociety more or leſs happily, according to the greater or leſs wiſdom of their legiſlator. I ſhall mention only thoſe that firſt occur to my memory.

Before the Goſpel was preached to the inhabitants of the Marian Iſlands, ſays father Jobien the jeſuit, they had neither altars, nor temples, nor ſacrifices, nor prieſts: they had only ſome cheats, named Macanas, who preached to them. They however believed that there was an hell and a paradiſe: their hell was a furnace, where the devil beat ſouls with a hammer, like iron in a forge; their paradiſe was filled with cacao-trees, ſugar-canes, and women. But it was neither their virtues nor vices that entitled them to a place either in paradiſe or in hell; for hell was allotted to thoſe who died of a violent death, and the others were admitted into paradiſe. Father Jobien adds, that to the ſouth of the Marian Iſles, are thirty two iſlands inhabited by nations who are abſolutely deſtitute of the knowledge of any religion, or of a Deity, and employ themſelves ſolely in eating, drinking, &c.

The Caribbees, according to Le Borde, who was employed in their converſion, have neither prieſt, nor altars, nor ſacrifices, nor any idea of the Deity; and will be well paid by thoſe who would make them chriſtians. They believe that the firſt man, named Longuo, had a great navel, from whence came mankind. This Longuo was the firſt agent; he had made the earth without mountains, which, according to them, were produced by a deluge. Envy was one of the firſt creatures, and ſhe ſoon overſpread the earth with evils; ſhe thought herſelf beautiful, but having ſeen the ſun, ſhe went to hide herſelf, and ever ſince appears only in the night.

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juſt to each other. Now, in order to compoſe ſuch laws, it is neceſſary that the human heart ſhould be known, and in the firſt place that we ſhould be convinced that men having ſenſibility for themſelves, and indifference with reſpect to others, are neither good nor bad, but ready to be either, according as a common intereſt unites or divides them; that ſelf-love, a ſenſation neceſſary to the preſervation of the ſpecies, is engraven by Nature in a manner not to be erazed (l); that a phyſical ſenſibility has produced in us a love of pleaſure and a hatred of pain; that pleaſure and pain have at length produced, and opened in all hearts the buds of ſelf-love, which by unfolding themſelves give birth to the paſſions; whence ſpring all our virtues and vices.

By contemplating theſe preliminary ideas, we learn why the paſſions, of which the forbidden tree is, according to ſome rabbins, only an ingenious image, bear equally on it branches good and evil fruit; we perceive the mechaniſm employed by them in the production of our virtues and vices; and in ſhort, a legiſlator diſcovers the means of laying men under a neceſſity of being virtuous, and cauſing the paſſions to bear no other fruit but probity and wiſdom.

Now, if the examination of theſe ideas, ſo proper to render men virtuous, is forbidden by the two ſpecies of men in power above-mentioned, the only means of haſtening the progreſs of morality, will be, as I have already ſaid, to ſhew that theſe protectors of ſtupidity, are the moſt cruel enemies of human nature, and to ſnatch from their hands the ſceptre of ignorance, by which they are authorized to command a ſtupid people. Upon which I ſhall obſerve that this, ſimple and eaſy as it appears in ſpeculation, is extremely difficult in the execution: Indeed there are men who have great and judicious minds united to the virtue and ſtrength of ſoul: there are men, who, being perſuaded that a citizen without courage is alſo without virtue, are ſenſible that the fortune and even the life of every individual is not his own, but is in a manner a depoſit which he ought always to be ready to deliver up when the ſafety of the public makes it neceſſary: but the number of ſuch men is always too few for them to enlighten the public; beſides, virtue muſt ever be of little weight, when the manners of an age fix upon it the ruſt of ridicule. Thus morality and the

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The Chiriguanes do not acknowledge a God. Letters ediff. 24.

The Giagues, according to Father Cavaſſy, acknowledge no being diſtinct from matter, and have not even in their language a word expreſſive of that idea: they worſhip only their anceſtors, whom they believe to be always living; and imagine, that their prince has authority over the rain.

At Indoſtan, ſays father Pons the Jeſuit, is a ſect of Brachmans, who think, that the mind is united to matter, and abſorbed by it; that the wiſdom which purifies the ſoul, and is only the knowledge of truth, produces the deliverance of the mind, by way of an analyſis. Now the mind, according to theſe Brachmans, diſengages itſelf ſometimes of a form, and ſometimes of a quality, by theſe three truths, "I am not in any thing, nothing is in me, I am not." When the mind ſhall be delivered from all theſe forms, there will be an end of the world. They add, that religion is ſo far from diſengaging the mind from theſe forms, that it only binds it the faſter within the matter by which it is abſorbed.

(l) The ſoldier and the commander of a privateer, deſire war, and nobody imputes it to them as a crime. It is viſible that in this reſpect their intereſt is not ſufficiently connected with the general intereſt.

legiſlation, which I conſider as one and the ſame ſcience, can only make an inſenſible progreſs.

Nothing but the lapſe of time can recal thoſe happy ages, deſcribed under the names of Aſtrea and Rhea, which were only an ingenious emblem of the perfection of theſe ſciences.

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covers a ſpecific remedy, or if he invents a wind-mill, theſe productions of the mind may render him a benefactor to the world (a).

Beſides, in affairs of genius the love of our country is not, as in the caſe of probity, excluſive of a love of all mankind. A nation does not acquire knowledge at the expence of the neighbouring ſtates: on the contrary, the more nations are enlightened, the more they reciprocally reflect ideas, and the more the force and activity of the univerſal genius is augmented. Whence I conclude, that though there is no probity relative to the univerſe, there are at leaſt certain kinds of genius that may be conſidered in this light.

CHAP. XXVI.

Of Genius, with reſpect to the Univerſe.

GEnius conſidered in this point of view will be, in conformity to the preceding definitions, the power of raiſing intereſting ideas in the minds of all people, either as inſtructive or agreeable.

This kind of genius is, doubtleſs, the moſt deſirable. There never was a time when that ſpecies of ideas which was ſuppoſed by all nations to flow from genius, was not really worthy of that name. It is not the ſame with reſpect to the power of creating thoſe kinds of ideas which one nation alone ſuppoſes to be derived from this ſource. Every nation has a time of ſtupidity and degradation, during which the people have no clear idea of genius; it then prodigally beſtows the name on certain aſſemblages of ideas that are agreeable to the mode, and always ridiculous in the eyes of poſterity. Theſe ages of degradation are commonly thoſe of deſpotic power; when, as a poet ſays, God deprives nations of one half of their underſtandings, that they may be enabled to bear the miſeries and puniſhments of ſlavery.

Among the ideas proper to pleaſe all people are thoſe that are inſtructive; which are belonging to certain arts and ſciences: others are alſo agreeable, ſuch as firſt the admired ideas and ſentiments in certain parts of Homer, Virgil, Corneille, Taſſo, and Milton; in which, as I have already obſerved, thoſe illuſtrious writers do not confine themſelves to the painting of a particular nation or age, but to that of human nature; ſuch are, in the ſecond place, the grand images with which theſe poets enrich their works.

(a) Thus reaſon is the greateſt of our advantages, and perhaps infinitely more to the happineſs of men than the virtue of any particular perſon. To this, is reſerved the power of forming the beſt legiſlation, and conſequently of rendering men as happy as poſſible. 'Tis true the romance of this legiſlation, is not yet completed, and that ſeveral ages will ſlide away before the fiction be realized: but, arming ourſelves with the patience of the abbe de ſaint Pierre, we may, after him, foretel, that every thing that is now a ſubject of the imagination will have exiſtence.

Men muſt neceſſarily have a confuſed ſenſation, that reaſon is the principal of all our advantages, ſince envy will allow a man to mention his probity, but not his good ſenſe.

To prove, that in every work of genius there are beauties proper to pleaſe univerſally, I chuſe theſe images for an example; and ſay, that grandeur in poetic pictures is a ſource of univerſal pleaſure (a). Not that all men are equally ſtruck with them: there are ſome as inſenſible to the beauties of deſcription as to the charms of harmony; and whom it would be as unjuſt as it would be uſeleſs to attempt to diſabuſe. By their inſenſibility they have acquired an unhappy right of diſowning the pleaſure they do not feel: but there are only a ſmall number of theſe people.

In fact, whether it be the habitual and impatient deſire of felicity that makes us wiſh for all perfections as a means of encreaſing our happineſs, and renders all thoſe grand objects agreeable to us where their contemplation ſeems to give a greater extent of ſoul, and more ſtrength and elevation of ideas; whether grand objects make a ſtronger, a more laſting, and more agreeable impreſſion; or whether, in ſhort, it is from ſome other cauſe, we find that we are offended at a confined view, and perceive ourſelves confined in the narrow paſſages between mountains, or when incloſed by a great wall; while, on the contrary, the eye loves to extend its view over a vaſt plain, to take in the ſurface of the ſea, or to loſe itſelf in examining a diſtant horizon.

Every thing that is great is adapted to pleaſe the eye and imagination of mankind: this ſpecies of deſcriptive beauty has infinitely the advantage over all thoſe that, depending on juſtneſs of proportions, can neither be ſo warmly nor ſo generally felt, ſince all nations have not the ſame ideas of proportions.

If we oppoſe to the caſcades, ſubterranean caves, and terraſes proportioned by art, the cataracts of the river St. Laurence, the gaping caverns of Ætna, the enormous maſſes of rock heaped upon each other, without, order in the Alps, ſhall we not find that the pleaſure produced by the prodigality and rude

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(a) If grand pictures do not always forcibly ſtrike us, this want of effect uſually depends on a cauſe that has no relation to their grandeur. It moſt commonly proceeds from being connected in our own minds with ſome diſagreeable object. Upon which I ſhall obſerve, that we rarely, in reading a poetical deſcription, receive only the pure impreſſion that would have been made on us by an exact view of the image. All objects participate of the uglineſs as well as of the beauty of thoſe with which they are commonly connected; to this cauſe we ought to attribute moſt of our diſguſts, and our unjuſt fits of enthuſiaſtic applauſe. A proverb uſed in the market, though ever ſo excellent, always appears low; becauſe it is neceſſarily connected in our memory with the image of thoſe who make uſe of it.

Who can doubt of its being from the ſame reaſon that the tales of ſpirits and apparitions recur in the night upon the mind of the wandering traveller, and double the horrors of a foreſt? That in the Pyrenean mountains, in the midſt of deſerts, abyſſes, and rocks, the imagination, ſtruck with the idea of the war of the Titans, beholds the mountains of Oſſa and Pelion, and looks with fear on the field of battle of theſe giants? Who doubts but that the remembrance of the bower deſcribed by Camoens, where the nymphs naked, flying, and purſued by warm deſires, fell at the feet of the Portugueſe, where love ſparkled in their eyes, and circulated in their veins; where their words were loſt, and nothing heard but the murmurs of happy lovers: who doubts, I ſay, that the remembrance of ſo voluptuous a deſcription has ſome time embelliſhed every grove?

From this reaſon it is ſo difficult to ſeparate entirely from the pleaſure we receive at the preſence of an object all the other pleaſing ſenſations that ſeem in a manner reflected upon it, from other objects to which it happens to be connected.

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magnificence visible in the works of nature is infinitely superior to that resulting from justness of proportions?

To be convinced of this, let a person in the night ascend a mountain in order to contemplate the firmament: what is the charm that draws him thither? Is it the agreeable symmetry in which the stars are ranged? Here, in the Via lactea, are innumerable suns heaped up without order, some farther distant than others; and there are vast deserts. What is then the source of his pleasures? The immensity of heaven itself. Indeed, what idea must he form of this immensity, when worlds of fire appear but as luminous points scattered here and there in the plains of æther? when suns still farther involved in the profound spaces of the firmament can scarcely be perceived? The imagination, which launches forwards to these last spheres, to comprehend all the worlds possible, is swallowed up in the vast and immeasurable concavity of the heavens, and plunged in a ravishing delight, produced by the contemplation of an object that fills his whole soul. Thus the grandeur of the decorations of this kind has occasioned the observation, That art is inferior to nature; which means no more than that great and noble pictures appear to us preferable to those that are comparatively little and mean.

In the arts susceptible of this kind of beauty, such as sculpture, architecture, and poetry, it is the enormity of the masses that places the colossus of Rhodes and the pyramids of Memphis among the wonders of the world. It is the grandeur of the descriptions that makes us admire Milton, for having the most strong and sublime imagination. His subject too, though little capable of beauties of another kind, was infinitely so of the beauties of description. He was obliged by his subject on the terrestrial paradise, to assemble in the short compass of the garden of Eden all the beauties nature has dispersed over the earth, to adorn a thousand different climates. Carried by the choice of the same subject to the unformed abyss of Chaos, he was to draw from thence his primitive materials for erecting the universe, to excaviate the bed of the ocean, to crown the earth with mountains, to cover it with verdure, to move and kindle the sun and stars, to spread over them the pavilion of the heavens, to paint the beauties of the first day of the world, and that freshness of the opening spring, with which his lively imagination embellished nature at her birth. He had then not only the most grand, but the most new and varied pictures to paint, which to the imagination of man are two other universal sources of pleasure.

It is with the imagination as with reason: by contemplation, or the combination either of the pictures of nature, or of philosophical ideas, poets and philosophers improve their imaginations and their reason; and thus are enabled to excel in different kinds, in which it is equally rare, and perhaps equally difficult to succeed.

What man, indeed, does not perceive, that the progress of the human mind ought to be uniform to whatever science or art it applies? If, to please the mind, says Fontenelle, we must employ, without fatiguing it; if we cannot employ it, without offering those new, grand, and primitive truths, where their novelty, importance, and fertility, strongly fix the attention; if we avoid fatiguing only by presenting ideas ranged with order, expressed in the most proper words, in which the subject has an uniformity and simplicity that renders

renders it eaſily comprehended, and where the variety is joined to ſimplicity (b); it is equally to the combination of grandeur, novelty, variety, and ſimplicity in the pictures, that is joined the greateſt pleaſure of the imagination. If, for example, the view or deſcription of a great lake is agreeable, that of a calm and boundleſs ſea is doubtleſs ſtill more ſo: its immenſity is a ſource of greater pleaſure. However beautiful this proſpect may be, its uniformity would ſoon render it tireſome. Therefore, if envelopped by black clouds, and carried by the north-wind, the tempeſt, perſonified by the poet's imagination, haſtens to the ſouth, rolling before him moveable mountains of water; who doubts but that the rapid, ſimple, and varied ſucceſſion of terrifying pictures, preſented by the troubled ſea, will every moment make new impreſſions on the imagination, ſtrongly fix our attention, employ the mind without fatiguing it, and conſequently pleaſe us more? But if the night happens to redouble the horrors of the ſame tempeſt, and the watry mountains where the chain terminates and encloſes the horrizon be inſtantly lighted by repeated and reflected flaſhes of lightning; who can doubt but that this dark ſea, ſuddenly changed to a ſea of fire, would form by the united novelty of the grandeur and variety of the images, a picture more adapted to fill the imagination with aſtoniſhment? Thus the art of poetry, conſidered merely as deſcriptive, is to offer nothing to view but objects in motion, and, if poſſible, to ſtrike ſeveral ſenſes at once. May not the deſcription of the roaring of the water, the howling of the winds, and the burſt of rolling thunder, add ſtill to the ſecret terror, and conſequently, to the pleaſure we experience at the view of a tempeſtuous ſea? At the return of ſpring, does not the deſcent of Aurora into the gardens of Marly, to open the buds of flowers; does not the perfumes ſhe at that inſtant exhales, the warbling of a thouſand birds, and the murmur of caſcades, encreaſe the charms of thoſe delightful groves? All the ſenſes are ſo many gates, by which agreeable impreſſions may enter our ſouls; and the more of them are opened at once, the higher does our pleaſure ariſe.

We ſee then, that as there are ideas generally uſeful to nations from their being inſtructive as thoſe that immediately belong to the ſciences, there are others alſo univerſally uſeful, as being agreeable; and that differing in this particular from probity, the genius of a ſingle perſon may have a relation to the whole univerſe.

The concluſion of this diſcourſe is, that in affairs that relate to the mind, as well as in moral actions, it is in the nature of man to praiſe love or gratitude, and to deſpiſe hatred or revenge. Intereſt then is the only diſpenſer of his eſteem: genius under whatſoever point of view it is conſidered is then never any thing more than a capacity for aſſembling ideas that are new and intereſting; and conſequently uſeful to mankind, either as being inſtructive or agreeable.

(b) It is proper to remark, that the ſimplicity in ſubjects and images is a perfection relative to the weakneſs of our minds.

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ESSAY III.

Whether Genius ought to be conſidered as a natural gift; or, as an effect of education.

CHAP. I.

I AM going to examine in this diſcourſe what the mind receives from nature and education: for which purpoſe it is neceſſary, firſt, to determine what is here meant by the word Nature.

This word may raiſe in our minds a confuſed idea of a being or a force that has endued us with all our ſenſes: now the ſenſes are the ſources of all our ideas. Being deprived of our ſenſes, we are deprived of all the ideas relative to it: a man born blind has for this reaſon no idea of colours; it is then evident, that in this ſignification genius ought to be conſidered as a gift of nature.

But if the word is taken in a different acceptation, and we ſuppoſe that among the men well formed, and endued with all their ſenſes, without any perceivable defect of their organization, nature has made ſuch a remarkable difference, and formed ſuch an unequal diſtribution of the intellectual powers, that one ſhall be ſo organized as to be ſtupid, and the other be a man of genius, the queſtion will become more delicate.

I confeſs, that at firſt we cannot conſider the great inequality in the minds of men, without admitting that there is the ſame difference between them as between bodies, ſome of which are weak and delicate, while others are ſtrong and robuſt. What can here occaſion ſuch variations from the uniform manner wherein nature operates?

This reaſoning, 'tis true, is founded only on analogy. It is like that of the aſtronomers, who conclude that the moon is inhabited, becauſe it is compoſed of nearly the ſame matter as our earth.

How weak ſoever this reaſoning may be, it muſt yet appear demonſtrative; for, ſay they, to what cauſe can be attributed the great diſproportion of intellects obſervable between people who appear to have had the ſame education?

In order to reply to this objection, it is proper firſt to enquire, whether ſeveral men can, ſtrictly ſpeaking, have the ſame education; and for this purpoſe to fix the idea included in the word Education.

If by education, we merely underſtand, that received in the ſame places, and under the ſame maſters; in this ſenſe the education is the ſame with an infinite number of men.

But, if we give to this word a more true and extenſive ſignification, and in general comprehend every thing that relates to our inſtruction; then, I ſay, that

that nobody receives the ſame education; becauſe each individual has, for his preceptors, if I may be allowed to ſay ſo, the form of government under which he lives, his friends, his miſtreſſes, the people about him, whatever he reads, and in ſhort chance; that is an infinite number of events, with reſpect to which our ignorance will not permit us to perceive their cauſes, and the chain that connects them together. Now, this chance has a greater ſhare in our education than is imagined. It is this that places certain objects before us, and in conſequence of this occaſions more happy ideas, and ſometimes leads to the greateſt diſcoveries. To give ſome examples: it was chance that conducted Galileo into the gardens of Florence, when the gardeners were working the pumps: it was that which inſpired thoſe gardeners, when not being able to raiſe the water above the height of thirty-two feet, to aſk him the cauſe, and by that queſtion, piqued the vanity of the philoſopher: it was at length his vanity, put in action by ſo caſual a queſtion, that obliged him to make this natural effect the ſubject of his thoughts, till at laſt, by diſcovering the weight of the air, he found the ſolution of the problem.

In the moment when the peaceful ſoul of Newton was employed by no buſineſs, and agitated by no paſſion, it was alſo chance that, drawing him under an apple-tree, looſened ſome of the fruit from the branches, and gave that philoſopher the firſt idea of his ſyſtem on gravitation: it was really this incident that afterwards made him turn his thoughts to enquire whether the moon does not gravitate towards the earth with the ſame force as that with which bodies fall on its ſurface? It is then to chance that great geniuſes are frequently obliged for their moſt happy thoughts. How many great minds are confounded among the people of moderate capacities for want of a certain tranquility of ſoul, the queſtion of a gardener, or the fall of an apple!

I am ſenſible, that we cannot at firſt, without ſome pain, attribute ſuch great effects to cauſes ſo diſtant and ſo ſmall in appearance (a). However, experience informs us, that in the phyſical, as in the moral world, the greateſt events are often produced by almoſt imperceptible cauſes. Who doubts that Alexander owed in part his conqueſt of Perſia to the inſtitutor of the Macedonian phalanx? That the adventures of Achilles, animating that prince with all the rage of glory, had a ſhare in the deſtruction of the empire of Darius, as Quintius Curtius contributed to the victories of Charles XII? Who can doubt that the tears of Veturia, by diſarming Coriolanus, confirmed the power of Rome, which was ready to ſink under the efforts of the Volſcii, and occaſioned that long train of victories which changed the face of the world; and

(a) We read, in the Literary year, that Boileau, when a child, playing in a yard, fell down. In his fall, his coats turned up, when a turky gave him ſeveral pecks on a very tender part. Boileau felt the injury during his whole life; and perhaps from thence aroſe that ſeverity of manners, and that want of ſenſibility viſible in all his works; from thence his ſatire againſt women, againſt Lulli, Quinaut, and all verſes of gallantry. Perhaps his antipathy againſt turkies might occaſion that ſecret averſion he always had to the Jeſuits, who brought them into France. To the ſame accident, perhaps, we owe his ſatire on double meanings, his admiration of Mr. Arnaud, and his epiſtle on the love of God; ſo true it is, that imperceptible cauſes often determine the whole conduct of life, and the whole ſeries of our ideas.

that, conſequently, it was to the tears of Veturia, that Europe owes its preſent ſituation? What a number of facts of the like kind (b) might here be mentioned? Guſtavus, ſays the abbe de Vertot, proceeded in vain through all the provinces of Sweden; he wandered above a year in the mountains of Delecarlia. The mountaineers, though prepoſſeſſed by his good mien, the tallneſs of his ſtature, and the apparent ſtrength of his body, were not however determined to join him, till on that very day when the prince harangued the Delecarlians, the old men of the country remarked, that the north wind had for ſome time conſtantly blowed. This wind appeared to them as a certain ſign of the protection of heaven, and as an order to take up arms in favour of the hero. It was then the north wind that placed the crown of Swedenon the head of Guſtavus.

Moſt events ſpring from cauſes equally ſmall: we are unacquainted with them, becauſe moſt hiſtorians have been themſelves ignorant of them, or have not had eyes capable of perceiving them. 'Tis true, that in this reſpect, the mind may repair their omiſſions; for the knowledge of certain principles eaſily ſupplies the knowledge of certain facts. Thus, without ſtaying any longer to prove that chance plays a greater part in the theatre of the world than is imagined, I ſhall conclude what I have juſt ſaid with obſerving, that if under the word Education, be comprehended every thing in general that contributes to our inſtruction, this chance muſt neceſſarily have the greateſt ſhare in it; and that no perſon being placed in exactly the ſame concourſe of circumſtances, no perſon can receive exactly the ſame education.

This fact being well weighed, who can be certain that a difference in education does not produce the difference obſervable in minds? Who can aſſert, that men are not like thoſe trees of the ſame ſpecies, whoſe ſeed being abſolutely the ſame, but never ſown exactly in the ſame earth, nor expoſed entirely to the ſame winds, the ſame ſun, or the ſame rain, muſt in unfolding themſelves neceſſarily produce an infinity of different forms. I may then conclude, that the inequality obſervable in the minds of men may be indifferently conſidered, either as the effect of nature, or of education. But whatever truth there may be in this concluſion, yet as it is extemely vague, and may be reduced in a manner to a perhaps, I think I ought to conſider this queſtion in a new point of view, and return back to principles more certain and determinate. To this purpoſe, it will be proper to reduce the queſtion to ſimple points; to aſcend to the origin of our ideas, and to the opening of the mind; and to recollect that man can only make uſe of his ſenſes, remember, and obſerve reſemblances and differences, that is, the connection ſubſiſting between the different objects that preſent themſelves, either to him, or to his memory; that therefore nature can only give men more or fewer capacities of mind, by enduing ſome preferably to others, with a little more delicacy of the ſenſes, extent of memory, and capacity of attention.

(b) In the minority of Louis XIV. when that prince was ready to retire into Burgundy, St. Evremond ſays, that the advice of Turenne kept him at Paris, and ſaved France. However, that great general, he adds, received leſs honour from that important counſel, than from defeating five hundred horſe. So true is it, that we with difficulty attribute great effects to cauſes that appear ſo ſmall and diſtant.

CHAP. II.

Of the Delicacy of the Senſes.

CAN the greater or leſs perfection of the organs of ſenſe, in which is neceſſarily included that of the interior organization, ſince I can here judge of the delicacy of the ſenſes only by effects, be the cauſe of the inequality obſervable in the minds of men?

In order to reaſon with ſome degree of juſtneſs on this ſubject, it is neceſſary to enquire, whether the greater or leſs delicacy of the ſenſes gives the mind either more extent or more juſtneſs, which neceſſarily includes all the mental faculties.

The greater or leſs perfection of the organs of ſenſe has no influence on juſtneſs of thinking, if men, whatever impreſſion they receive from the ſame objects, muſt always perceive the ſame connections between thoſe objects. Now, to prove that they perceive them, I ſhall chuſe the ſenſe of ſight for an example, as that to which we owe the greateſt number of our ideas. And I ſay, with reſpect to the difference of eyes, that if a fathom appears to one man ſhorter, ſnow leſs white, and ebony not ſo black as they appear to another, yet, theſe two men always perceive the ſame relations between thoſe objects; conſequently, a fathom always appears longer than a foot; the ſnow whiter than any other body, and ebony the blackeſt of all kinds of wood.

Now, as the juſtneſs of our thoughts always conſiſts in a clear view of the true relations that ſubſiſt between objects, and as in repeating, with reſpect to the other ſenſes, what I have here ſaid on that of ſight, we ſhall conſtantly come to the ſame concluſion; I infer, that the greater or leſs degree of perfection, either in the external or internal organization, can have no influence on the juſtneſs of our judgments.

Moreover, if extent be diſtinguiſhed from juſtneſs of thought, the greater or leſs degree of delicacy of the ſenſes will make no addition to that extent. If ſight be again taken for an example, it is evident, that a mind, being more or leſs extenſive, does not depend on the greater or leſs number of objects, to the excluſion of others which a man endued with very fine ſenſes may place in his memory. There are very few objects ſo imperceptible by their ſmallneſs, that conſidered exactly with the ſame attention by two eyes equally young, and as well employed, can be perceived by the one, and not by the other: but was the difference in this reſpect made by nature between men, whom I call well organized, that is, in whoſe organization there appears no defect (a), infinitely more conſiderable than it is, I am able to ſhew, that

(a) I ſpeak in this chapter only of thoſe men who are well organized and deprived of none of the ſenſes, and who beſides are not afflicted either with the diſeaſe of folly or ſtupidity, which are commonly produced, the one by a defect of memory, and the other by a total want of that faculty.

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this difference does not produce any with reſpect to the extenſiveneſs of the mind.

Let us ſuppoſe two men endued with the ſame capacity for attention, the ſame extent of memory, and, in ſhort, equal in every thing except the delicacy of the ſenſes; upon this hypotheſis, he who has the beſt ſight may, beyond all contradiction, place in his memory, and combine many of theſe objects which by their ſmallneſs are concealed from him who, in this reſpect, has a leſs perfect organization; but theſe two men having upon my ſuppoſition a memory equally extenſive, and capable if they pleaſe, of containing two thouſand objects, it is certain, that the ſecond may ſupply by hiſtorical facts the objects which a ſmaller degree of delicacy of ſight would not have permitted him to receive; and that he may complete, if he pleaſes, the number of two thouſand objects, contained in the memory of the firſt. Now, if between theſe two men, he who has the ſenſe of ſight leſs perfect may yet depoſit in the magazine of his memory as great a number of objects as the other; and if, beſides, theſe men are equal in every thing elſe, they muſt conſequently form as many combinations. The greater or leſs perfection of the organ of ſight cannot however fail of having an influence on the genius or bent of their minds, and make one a painter, or a botaniſt, and the other an hiſtorian and a politician; but it can have no influence with reſpect to the extent of their minds. Thus, we do not obſerve a conſtant ſuperiority of mind either among thoſe who have a greater delicacy in the ſenſes of ſeeing and hearing or thoſe who habitually uſe ſpectacles, and ear-trumpets; theſe means make a greater difference between them and other men than in this reſpect nature herſelf has done. From whence I conclude, that between the men whom I call well organized, the ſuperiority of knowledge, is not in proportion to the external or internal perfection of theſe organs; and that the great inequality ſubſiſting between minds neceſſarily depends on ſome other cauſe.

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it is neceſſary firſt to examine, whether the difference of extent in the memory of perſons well organized be as remarkable in fact, as it is in appearance: and ſuppoſing this difference real, it muſt ſecondly be conſidered, whether it ought to be regarded as the cauſe of the unequal diſtribution of mental abilities.

As to the firſt ſubject of enquiry, I ſay, that attention alone may engrave in the memory the ſubjects that without attention would make only inſenſible impreſſions upon us; nearly reſembling thoſe a reader ſucceſſively receives of each of the letters that compoſe a page in a book. It is then certain, that to judge whether the defect of memory is in men an effect of their inattention, or of an imperfection in the organs, we muſt have recourſe to experience. This teaches us that among men there are many, as St. Auguſtin and Montaigne ſay of themſelves, who appear to be endued with only a very weak memory; and yet from the deſire of obtaining knowledge, acquire ſuch a number of ideas, as to cauſe them to be placed in the rank of perſons of an extaordinary memory. Now, if the deſire of inſtruction be alone ſufficient to enable us to know a great deal, I conclude, that the memory is almoſt entirely factitious. The extent of the memory therefore firſt depends on the daily uſe made of it: ſecondly, on the attention with which we conſider the objects we would impreſs upon it, and which without attention, as I have juſt ſaid, would leave only ſlight traces that would be eaſily effaced; and thirdly, on the order in which we range our ideas. To this order we owe all the prodigies of memory; it conſiſts in uniting together all our ideas, and conſequenly charging the memory only with ſuch objects as by their nature, or the manner in which they are conſidered, preſerve between them a connection ſufficient to recal each other.

The frequent repreſentations of the ſame objects to the memory are in a manner ſo many touches of the graver, which cuts them deeper in proportion to the frequency with which they are repreſented (a). Beſides, this order ſo proper to recal the ſame objects to our remembrance, not only gives us an explanation of all the phenomena of the memory, but teaches us, that the ſagacity of mind in one perſon, that is, the promptitude with which one man is ſtruck with the force of truth, frequently depends on the analogy of that truth with the objects about which he is employed. He cannot catch it by perceiving all its connections, without rejecting all the ideas that firſt preſented themſelves to his remembrance, and without turning up-ſide down the whole magazine of his memory, to ſearch for the ideas connected with that truth.

This is the reaſon why ſo many men are inſenſible to the expoſition of certain facts, for thoſe truths ſhake the whole chain of their thoughts, by awakening a great number of ideas in their minds: it is a flaſh of lightning, which ſpreads a rapid light over the whole horizon of their ideas. It is then to order that a perſon frequently owes the ſagacity of his mind, and the extent of his memory: thus it is, a want of order, the effect of the indifference a perſon entertains for a certain kind of ſtudies, which prevents all remembrances in thoſe who, in all reſpects, appear to have more extenſive memories. This is

(a) Memory, ſays Mr. Locke, is a table of braſs, covered with characters that become inſenſibly effaced by time, if they are not ſometimes touched up by the graver.

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the reaſon why the learned in languages and hiſtory, who, by the aſſiſtance of a chronological order, eaſily impreſs and preſerve the remembrance of words, dates, and hiſtorical facts, cannot often retain the proof of a moral truth, the demonſtration of a geometrical problem, or the painting of a landſcape, which they have long examined: in fact, theſe ſorts of objects having no analogy with the reſt of the facts or ideas with which their memories is filled, they cannot frequently renew the repreſentation, or impreſs them more deeply, and conſequently they are unable to preſerve them long.

This is the productive cauſe of all the different kinds of memory, and the reaſon why thoſe who know the leaſt in one kind of knowledge, are commonly thoſe who in that kind forget the moſt.

It appears then, that a great memory is a phænomenon of order; that it is almoſt always factitious; and that between thoſe whom I call well organized, that great diſproportion viſible in point of memory is not ſo much the effect of the unequal perfection of the organs that ſupply it with materials as of an unequal attention to improve it.

But ſuppoſing that the unequal extent of memory obſervable among mankind was entirely the work of nature, and was as conſiderable in reality as it is in appearance, I aſſert, that it could not have any influence on the extent of the mind; firſt, becauſe a great genius, as I am going to ſhew, does not neceſſarily ſuppoſe a great memory; and, ſecondly, becauſe every man is endued with a memory ſufficient to raiſe him to the higheſt degree of mental abilities.

Before the firſt of theſe propoſitions is proved, it is proper to obſerve, that as perfect ignorance conſtitutes perfect folly, the man of genius ſometimes appears to want memory only from the too confined ſignification given to the word memory, in reſtraining it to the remembrance of names, dates, places, and perſons, for which the man of genius has no curioſity, and often finds that here his memory fails him. But in comprehending in the ſignification of this word the remembrance of ideas, images, and reaſonings, none of them is deficient; whence it follows, that there is no ſuch thing as genius without memory.

This obſervation being made, I am to enquire what extent of memory is neceſſary to conſtitute a great genius. Let us chuſe for example two men illuſtrious in different kinds of genius, as Locke and Milton, and examine whether the greatneſs of their talents ought to be conſidered as the effect of the extraordinary extent of their memories.

If we firſt caſt our eyes on Locke; and ſuppoſe, that ſtruck with a happy thought of his own, or obtained by reading Ariſtotle, Gaſſendi, or Montaigne, that philoſopher perceived that all our ideas are derived from the ſenſes, it is evident that to deduce his whole ſyſtem from this firſt idea required leſs extent of memory than cloſe application to reflections; that the ſmalleſt memory is ſufficient to retain all the ſubjects, from the compariſon of which he is to deduce the certainty of his principle, to enable him to unravel the chain, and conſequently to merit, and obtain the title of a great genius.

With reſpect to Milton, if I conſider him in the point of view in which he is generally allowed to be infinitely ſuperior to the other poets; if I conſider only the ſtrength, grandeur, variety, and novelty of his poetic images, I am obliged

obliged to confeſs, that the ſuperiority of his genius in theſe does not ſuppoſe a great extent of memory. Whatever grandeur there may be in his pictures, ſuch as that where uniting fire to ſolid terreſtrial matter, he paints the ground of hell as burning with ſolid, as the lake with liquid fire; but grand as his compoſitions are, I ſay, it is evident, that the number of bold images proper to form ſuch pictures ought to be confined within proper bounds: conſequently, the grandeur of this poet's imagination is leſs the effect of a great extent of memory, than of deep reflection upon his art. It was this reflection that made him ſearch out the ſource of the pleaſures of the imagination; and made him diſcover, that they conſiſted in the aſſemblage of new images, proper to form grand, true, and ſtriking pictures, and in the conſtant choice of thoſe ſtrong expreſſions are the colours of poetry, and by which he has rendered his deſcriptions viſible to the eyes of the imagination.

As the laſt example of the ſmall extent of memory, neceſſary to a fine imagination, I give in a note, the tranſlation of a piece of Engliſh poetry (a). This

(a) A young virgin awaked and guided by love goes before the appearance of Aurora, to a valley, where ſhe waits for the coming of her lover, who, at the riſing of the ſun, is to offer a ſacrifice to the Gods. Her ſoul, in the ſoft ſituation in which ſhe is placed, by the hopes of approaching happineſs, indulges while waiting for him, the pleaſure of contemplating the beauties of nature, and the riſing of the luminary that was to bring the object of her tenderneſs. She expreſſes herſelf thus:

"Already the ſun gilds the tops of thoſe antique oaks: and the waves of thoſe falling torrents that roar among the rocks, ſhine with his beams. Already I perceive the ſummit of thoſe ſhaggy mountains, whence ariſe the vaults which, half concealed in the air, offer a formidable retreat to the ſolitary who there retire. Night folds up her veil. Ye wanton fires that miſlead the wandering traveller, retire to the quagmires and marſhy fens: and thou, ſun, lord of the heavens, who filleſt the air with reviving heat, who ſoweſt with dewy pearls the flowers of theſe meadows, and giveſt colours to the varied beauties of nature, receive my firſt homage, and haſten thy courſe: thy appearance proclaims that of my lover. Freed from the pious cares that detain him ſtill at the foot of the altars, love will ſoon bring him to mine. Let all around me partake of my joy! Let all bleſs the riſing of the luminary, by which we are enlightened! Ye flowers that encloſe in your boſoms the odours that cool night condenſes there, open your buds, and exhale in the air your balmy vapours. I know not whether the delightful intoxication that poſſeſſes my ſoul does not embelliſh whatever I behold; but the rivulet that in pleaſing meanders winds along this valley, enchants me with its murmurs. Zephyrus careſſes me with his breath. The fragrant plants, preſſed under my feet, waft to my ſenſes their perfumes. Oh! if felicity ſometimes condeſcends to viſit the abode of mortals, to theſe places ſhe doubtleſs retires. But with what ſecret trouble am I agitated! Already impatience mingles its poiſon with the ſweetneſs of my expectation: this valley has already loſt its beauties. Is joy then ſo fleeting? Is it as eaſy to ſnatch it from us, as for the light down of theſe plants to be blown away by the breath of the Zephyrs? In vain have I recourſe to flattering hope; each moment increaſes my diſturbance.--He will come no more!--Who keeps him at a diſtance from me?--What duty more ſacred than that of calming the inquietudes of love!--But what do I ſay? Fly jealous ſuſpicions, injurious to his fidelity, and formed to extinguiſh my tenderneſs. If jealouſy grows by the ſide of love, it will ſtifle it, if not pulled up by the roots: it is the ivy which by a verdant chain embraces, but dries up the trunk that ſerves for its ſupport. I know my lover too well to doubt of his tenderneſs. He, like me, has far from the pomp of courts ſought the tranquil aſylum of the fields. Touched by the ſimplicity of my heart, and by my beauty, my ſenſual rivals call him in vain to their arms. Shall he be ſeduced by the advances of coquetry, which on the cheek of the young

This traſlation and the preceding examples will, I believe, prove to thoſe who would decompoſe the works of illuſtrious men, that a great genius does not neceſſarily ſuppoſe a great memory. I will even add, that the extraordinary extent of the one is abſolutely excluſive of the extraordinary extent of the other. As ignorance cauſes the genius to languiſh for want of nouriſhment, ſo vaſt erudition frequently choaks it up, by a ſuper-abundance of aliment. To be convinced of this, it will be ſufficient to examine into the different uſe two men muſt make of their time, who would render themſelves ſuperior to each other, the one in genius, and the other in memory.

If a work of genius is an aſſemblage of new ideas, and if every new idea is only a relation newly perceived between certain objects, he who would diſtinguiſh himſelf by his genius muſt neceſſarily employ the far greateſt part of his time in obſerving the various relations objects have to each other, and ſpend only the leaſt part in placing facts or ideas in his memory. On the contrary, he who would ſurpaſs others in extent of memory muſt, without loſing his time in contemplating and comparing objects with each other, employ whole days without ceaſing in arranging new objects in his memory. Now, by ſo different an uſe of time, it is evident, that the firſt of theſe two men muſt be as inferior in memory to the ſecond as he will be ſuperior in genius: a truth which was probably perceived by Deſcartes, when he ſaid, that in order to improve the mind we ought leſs to learn, than to contemplate. Whence I conclude, not only that a very great genius does not ſuppoſe a very great memory, but that the extraordinary extenſiveneſs of the one is always excluſive of the extraordinary extent of the other.

To conclude this chapter, and to prove that the inequality obſervable in the mental abilities is not to be attributed to the unequal extent of the memory, it only remains to ſhew, that men being commonly well organized are endued with an extent of memory ſufficient to raiſe the moſt lofty ideas. Every man is, in this reſpect, ſo favoured by nature, that if the magazine of his memory is capable of containing a number of ideas or facts, he may by comparing them, always perceive ſome new relations, conſtantly encreaſe the

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young maid tarniſhes the ſnow of innocence, and the carnation of modeſty, and daubs it with the whiteneſs of art, and the paint of effrontery? What do I ſay? His contempt for her is, perhaps, only a ſnare for me. Can I be ignorant of the partiality of men, and the arts they employ to ſeduce us? Nouriſhed in a contempt for our ſex, it is not us, it is their pleaſures that they love. Cruel as they are, they have placed in the rank of the virtues, the barbarous fury of revenge, and the mad love of their country; but never have they reckoned fidelity among the virtues! Without remorſe they abuſe innocence; and often their vanity contemplates our griefs with delight. But, no; fly far from me, ye odious thoughts; my lover will come! A thouſand times have I experienced it: as ſoon as I perceive him, my agitated mind is calm; and I often forget the too juſt cauſe I have for complaint; for near him I can only know happineſs.---Yet, if he is treacherous to me, if in the very moment when my love excuſes him, he conſummates the crime of infidelity in another's boſom, may all nature take up arms in revenge! may he periſh!---What do I ſay? Ye elements be deaf to my cries! thou earth, open not thy profound abyſs! let the monſter walk the time preſcribed him on thy ſplendid ſurface. Let him ſtill commit new crimes; and ſtill cauſe the tears of the too credulous maids to flow, and, if heaven avenges them, and puniſhes him, may it at leaſt be the prayer of ſome other unfortunate woman, &c.

number of his ideas, and conſequently be always enlarging his mind. Now, if thirty or forty objects, as geometry ſhews, may be compared with each other in ſuch a number of ways that in the courſe of a long life no body could obſerve all the relations, or deduce all the poſſible ideas that might be drawn from them, and if among the men whom I call well organized, there are none whoſe memory cannot contain not only all the words of one language, but alſo an infinite number of dates, facts, names, places, and perſons, and in ſhort, a number of particulars far exceeding ſix or ſeven thouſand, I may boldly conclude from thence, that every man well organized is endued with a capacity of memory, much ſuperior to what he can uſe for enlarging his ideas; that a greater extent of memory would not give a more extenſive genius; and that, therefore, we ſhould be far from conſidering this inequality of memory among mankind as the cauſe of inequality of their mental faculties, ſince this laſt inequality is only the effect either of the greater or leſs attention with which they obſerve the connections between different objects, or of the bad choice of the objects with which they load their memories. There are, indeed, barren objects, ſuch as dates, names of places, perſons, or other things of the like kind, which hold a great place in the memory without being able to produce either new, or intereſting ideas with reſpect to the public. The inequality of minds depends in part then on the choice of the objects placed in the memory. If young men who obtained a great reputation in the colleges have not always ſupported it in a more advanced age, it is becauſe the compariſon, and happy application of Deſpautere's rules, which make good ſcholars, are not the leaſt proof that theſe young men carried their views to thoſe objects of compariſon from which reſult ſuch ideas as thoſe in which the public is intereſted: and therefore few great men, have not courage to be ignorant of an infinite number of uſeleſs things.

CHAP. IV.

Of the unequal capacity of Attention.

I Have ſhewn, that theſe great inequalities of genius do not depend on the greater or leſs degree of perfection, either of the organs of ſenſe, or of the organ of memory. Nothing now remains but to ſearch for the cauſe of the unequal capacity for attention among men.

As it is the greater or the leſs degree of attention that engraves more or leſs deeply the objects in the memory, which makes us perceive more or leſs perfectly, the relations that form moſt of our judgments, whether true or falſe; and as to this attention we owe almoſt all our ideas, it ſeems evident, ſay they, that the unequal powers in the minds of men are owing to their unequal capacity for attention.

If the ſlighteſt diſeaſe, to which we give the name of indiſpoſition, is thought ſufficient to render moſt men incapable of a continued attention, it is doubtleſs

leſs to diſeaſes, in a manner inſenſible, and conſequently to the inequality of power given by nature to different men, that we ought principally to attribute the total incapacity for attention, and the unequal proportion of mental abilities obſervable in moſt of them: from whence it is concluded that thoſe abilities are merely gifts of nature.

But how plauſible ſoever this reaſoning may appear, it is not confirmed by experience.

If we except the men afflicted by habitual diſeaſes, who being compelled by pain to fix their whole attention on their condition, cannot place it on objects proper to improve their minds, and conſequently cannot be included in the number of the men whom I call well organized, we ſhall ſee that all other men, and even thoſe of weak and delicate conſtitutions, ought, according to the above manner of reaſoning, to have fewer abilities than men of a ſtrong and robuſt form, though in this reſpect they frequently appear more favoured by nature.

In men of healthy and ſtrong conſtitutions, who apply themſelves to the arts and ſciences, it ſeems as if their ſtrength and vigour, by giving them a greater propenſity to pleaſure, frequently diverts them from ſtudy and reflection; and that thoſe of a weak and delicate conſtitution cannot be diverted from their ſtudies by ſlight and frequent indiſpoſitions. All that we can be be certain of is, that among the men animated by nearly an equal love of ſtudy, our ſucceſs in meaſuring the greatneſs of their mental abilities ſeems entirely to depend either on the greater or fewer diſtractions occaſioned by a difference of taſtes, fortunes, and ſtations, and on the happy or unhappy choice of ſubjects on which we treat, the more or leſs perfect method uſed in compoſing, the greater or leſs propenſity to reflection, the books we read, the men of taſte with whom we converſe, and, in ſhort, the objects which chance daily preſents to our view. It ſeems as if, in the concourſe of circumſtances neceſſary to form a man of genius, the different capacity for attention that may be produced by a greater or leſs ſtrength of conſtitution is of no moment. Thus the inequality of genius occaſioned merely by the different conſtitutions of men is altogether inſenſible; and, as no exact obſervations have hitherto been made to determine what conſtitution is moſt proper to form men of genius, we cannot yet be certain, whether the tall or the ſhort, the fat or the lean, the bilious or the ſanguine, have the greateſt aptitude of mind.

But though this ſummary anſwer may be ſufficient to refute a manner of reaſoning founded only on probabilities; yet, as this queſtion is of great importance, it is neceſſary to reſolve it with preciſion, and to enquire whether this want of attention in men is either the effect of a natural incapacity for application, or of a too languid deſire of inſtruction.

All the men whom I call well organized are capable of attention, ſince all learn to read, obtain their mother-tongue, and are capable of underſtanding the firſt propoſitions of Euclid. Now all men capable of comprehending theſe firſt propoſitions have a phyſical power of underſtanding them all: in fact, both in geometry, and in all the other ſciences, the greater or leſs facility with which we diſcover truth depends on the number, either greater or leſs of thoſe antecedent propoſitions, which, in order to perceive it, muſt be preſented to the memory. Now, if every man well organized, as I have proved in the

preceding chapter, may place in his memory a number of ideas much ſuperior to what is required for the demonſtration of any propoſition in geometry; and if by the aſſiſtance of order, and the frequent repreſentation of the ſame ideas, we may, as experience proves, render them ſo familiar, and ſo habitually preſent, as to recollect them without difficulty, it muſt follow that every one has a phyſical power of purſuing the demonſtration of any geometrical truth; and that after having aſcended from propoſition to propoſition, and from analogous ideas to other analogous ideas, till a perſon has acquired the knowledge, for inſtance, of ninety-nine propoſitions, he may demonſtrate the hundredth with the ſame eaſe that he did the ſecond, which is as diſtant from the firſt as the hundreth is from the ninety-ninth.

It is proper now to examine, whether the degree of attention neceſſary to comprehend the demonſtration of one geometrical truth is not ſufficient for the diſcovery of thoſe truths that place a man in the rank of thoſe of diſtinguiſhed learning. In order to this, I deſire the reader to obſerve with me the ſteps by which the human mind is led either to the diſcovery of truth, or in merely following demonſtration. I ſhall not draw my example from geometry, becauſe the greateſt part of mankind are ignorant of that ſcience; I ſhall therefore chuſe morality, and propoſe the following problem, "Why unjuſt conqueſts do not reflect as much diſhonour on nations as robberies do on individuals?"

In reſolving this moral problem, the ideas that would firſt preſent themſelves to my mind are thoſe of juſtice, which are the moſt familiar to me: I conſider it then between individuals, and perceive that robbery, which diſturbs and overthrows the order of ſociety, is juſtly conſidered as infamous.

But what advantage ſoever there may be in applying to nations my ideas of the juſtice that ſubſiſts between citizens; yet, at the ſight of ſo many unjuſt wars, at all times undertaken by people who are the admiration of the world, I ſhall ſoon ſuſpect that the ideas of juſtice, conſidered as relating to a private perſon, are not applicable to nations. This ſuſpicion would be the firſt ſtep made by my mind to arrive at the diſcovery propoſed. To clear up this ſuſpicion, I firſt baniſh the ideas of juſtice moſt familiar to me: I recal to my memory, and reject ſucceſſively an infinie number of ideas, till I perceive, that in order to reſolve this queſtion, it is neceſſary firſt to form clear and general ideas of juſtice; and that for this purpoſe, it is neceſſary to aſcend to the eſtabliſhment of ſociety, till I come to thoſe diſtant times where we may better perceive its origin, and in which we may more eaſily diſcover the reaſon why the principles of juſtice conſidered in relation to citizens is not applicable to nations.

This I may call the ſecond ſtep. I may conſequently repreſent to my mind men abſolutely deſtitute of knowledge and arts, and nearly ſuch as they muſt have been in the firſt age of the world. I then ſee them diſperſed in the woods, like other voracious animals: I ſee, that before the invention of arms, theſe firſt men being too weak to oppoſe the wild beaſts, and becoming inſtructed by danger, neceſſity, or fear, perceived that it was for their mutual intereſt to enter into ſociety, and to form a league againſt the animals their common enemies. I at length perceive that theſe men, thus aſſembled, ſoon became enemies, from the deſire of poſſeſſing the ſame things, and took

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up arms mutually to raviſh them from each other; that the ſtrongeſt at firſt frequently took them from thoſe who had greater mental abilities, who invented arms, and prepared ambuſcades to recover them again; and that ſtrength and dexterity were conſequently the firſt titles to property: that the earth originally belonged to the ſtrongeſt, and afterwards to the more ingenious: and that theſe two were the only titles by which every thing was poſſeſſed: but that at length, inſtructed by their common misfortunes, they perceived that their union could be of no advantage to them, and that ſociety could not ſubſiſt, without adding new conventions to the firſt, by which each individual perſon ſhould renounce his right to make uſe of his own ſtrength and dexterity, contrary to the intereſt of the whole, and all in general ſhould reciprocally guarantee the preſervation of the life and ſubſtance of each, and engage to take up arms againſt the perſon who ſhould violate theſe conventions: that thus the intereſt of particular perſons formed a common intereſt, that neceſſarily gave to different actions the names juſt, lawful, and unjuſt, according as they were uſeful, indifferent, or prejudicial to ſociety.

Being once arrived at this truth, I eaſily diſcover the ſource of human virtues. I ſee that men, without a ſenſibility of pain and natural pleaſure, without deſires, without paſſions, and equally indifferent with reſpect to every thing, would not have known a perſonal intereſt: that without perſonal intereſt they would not have united in ſociety, would not have entered into conventions among themſelves, and would not have had a general intereſt; conſequently there would have been no actions, either juſt or unjuſt; and that thus natural ſenſibility and perſonal intereſt have been the authors of all juſtice (a).

This truth, founded on the following axiom of the civil law, "that intereſt is the meaſure of human actions", and beſides, confirmed by a thouſand facts, proves to me that virtuous or vicious, according as our particular paſſions or taſtes are conformable, or contrary to the general intereſt, tends ſo neceſſarily to our particular welfare, that the Divine Legiſlator himſelf has thought proper to engage men to the practice of virtue, by promiſing an eternal happineſs in exchange for the temporal pleaſures they are ſometimes obliged to ſacrifice to it.

This principle being eſtabliſhed, my mind draws ſeveral conſequences from it; and I perceive that every convention, where private intereſt is found to be oppoſite to the general intereſt, would always have been violated, had not the legiſlators conſtantly propoſed great rewards as inducements to the practice of virtue; and if they had not inceſſantly oppoſed the bank of diſhonour and puniſhment againſt that natural inclination that leads all men to uſurpation. I ſee then that rewards and puniſhments are the only bands by which they have been able to bind the private to the general intereſt; and I conclude, that laws made for the happineſs of all would be obſerved by none, if the magiſtrates were not armed with the power neceſſary to put them in execution. Without this power, the laws, being violated by the majority, might with juſtice be infringed by each individual; becauſe, having no other foundation than the public advantage, as ſoon as by a general infraction they became uſeleſs, they would from thence forward be void, and ceaſe to be laws; each perſon would

(a) This propoſition cannot be denied, without admitting innate ideas.

then reſume his original natural rights; each would ſolely conſult his private intereſt, which juſtly forbids his obſerving laws that would become prejudicial to him who ſhould alone obſerve them. And therefore, if for the ſafety of travelling on the high roads, all ſhould be forbid to carry arms, and yet for want of patrols the roads ſhould be infeſted with robbers, that law would not conſequently have anſwered its end: I therefore not only ſay, that a man might travel upon it with arms, and violate that convention, or that law, without injuſtice, but that he could not even obſerve it without folly.

After my mind has thus proceeded ſtep by ſtep, till it has arrived at clear and general ideas of juſtice; after having found that it conſiſts in the exact obſervation of the laws which the common intereſt, that is, the aſſemblage of all the intereſts of the individuals has cauſed them to make, I have nothing farther to do than to apply theſe ideas of juſtice to nations. Inſtructed by the principles above eſtabliſhed, I immediately perceive that all nations have not entered into conventions, by which they reciprocally guarantee the poſſeſſion of the countries and effects of each other. If I would diſcover the cauſe, my memory, on my tracing the general map of the world, informs me, that different ſtates have not made theſe kinds of conventions, becauſe they have not been prompted to it by ſo preſſing an intereſt as that of the individuals; becauſe nations may ſubſiſt without any ſuch conventions, though ſociety cannot be ſupported without laws. Whence I conclude, that the ideas of juſtice conſidered between nation and nation, or individual and individual, ought to be extremely different.

If the church and ſovereign princes permit the negroe trade; if the chriſtian who curſes in the name of God him who brings troubles and diſſention into families, bleſſes the merchant who ſails to the gold coaſt or to Senegal, to exchange the merchandize of which the Africans are fond for negroes; if for the ſake of this commerce, Europeans feel no remorſe at keeping up an eternal war among thoſe people, it is becauſe, from the want of particular treaties, and cuſtoms generally known by the law of nations, both the church, and ſovereign powers think that people are, with reſpect to each other, in the ſame ſituation as man in a ſtate of nature before they entered into ſociety, when they acknowledged no other laws but thoſe of ſtrength and cunning; when they had no convention among themſelves, no property, and conſequently there could be no robbery nor injuſtice. Even with reſpect to the particular treaties which nations enter into with each other, theſe never being guarantied by a ſufficient number of great nations, it appears that they can hardly ever cauſe them to be obſerved by force; and conſequently being like laws without power, they muſt frequently remain unexecuted.

When by applying the general ideas of juſtice to nations, my mind has reduced the queſtion of this point, in order to diſcover why the people who break the treaties they have made with others are leſs guilty than the private perſon who violates the conventions made with ſociety; and why, in conformity to the public opinion, unjuſt conqueſts are leſs diſhonourable to a nation than a robbery is to a particular perſon, it is ſufficient to recal to mind a liſt of all the treaties broken from time to time by all nations. I then ſee that there is always a high probability, that without regard to theſe treaties, the governors of every nation will take advantage of times of calamity to attack their neigh-

neighbours, to conquer them, or at leaſt to put it out of their power to hurt them. Now, every nation being inſtructed by hiſtory may conſider this probability ſufficiently great, to juſtify the belief that the infraction of a treaty which the prince finds it for his intereſt to violate, is a tacit clauſe of all treaties, which are properly no more than truces; and that conſequently, in ſeizing a favourable opportunity of humbling his neighbours, he only prevents them, ſince all nations being forced to expoſe themſelves to the reproach of injuſtice, or of bearing the yoke of ſervitude, are reduced to the alternative of being ſlaves or ſovereigns.

Beſides, as it is almoſt impoſſible for any nation to preſerve itſelf; and as limiting the aggrandizement of an empire muſt, as is proved by the hiſtory of the Romans, be conſidered as an almoſt certain preſage of its decay, it is evident that each nation may even believe itſelf the more authorized to make thoſe conqueſts that are called unjuſt, as not finding, for inſtance, in the guarantee of two nations againſt a third as much ſecurity as an individual finds in his own nation againſt another individual; the treaty relating to it ought then to be much the leſs ſacred, as its execution is more uncertain.

Thus, when my mind has penetrated to this laſt idea, I diſcover the ſolution of the moral problem I had propoſed to myſelf. I then perceive that the infraction of treaties, and that kind of robbery which ſubſiſts between nations, muſt, as what is paſt has proved, be a ſecurity for times to come, and ſtill continue till all ſtates, or at leaſt the greateſt number of them, have concluded general conventions; till the nations in conformity to the project of Henry IV. or the abbe de ſaint Pierre, have reciprocally guarantied their poſſeſſions; and engaged to take up arms againſt the people who ſhall attempt to ſubdue another; till chance ſhall have formed ſuch a diſproportion between the power of each ſtate in particular, and that of all the others who are united, that theſe conventions may be maintained by force; and till the different nations have eſtabliſhed among each other the ſame policy which a wiſe legiſlator uſes with reſpect to the citizens, when by rewards affixed to good actions, and puniſhments to the bad, he lays the citizens under a neceſſity of being virtuous, by giving probity perſonal intereſt for its ſupport.

It is then certain, that, in conformity to the public opinion, unjuſt conqueſts being not ſo contrary to the laws of equity, and conſequently leſs criminal than robberies committed by private perſons, they ought not to caſt ſuch diſhonour on a nation as on a citizen.

This moral problem being reſolved, if the progreſs made by my mind for that purpoſe be obſerved, it will be found that I at firſt recollected the ideas that were moſt familiar to me: then compared them with each other, and obſerved their agreement and diſagreement in relation to the ſubject of my enquiry; that I at length rejected thoſe ideas, in order to recollect others, and repeated this, till at laſt my memory preſented the objects of compariſon from which the truth I was in ſearch of ought to flow.

Now, as the progreſs of the mind is always the ſame, what I have ſaid on the diſcovery of one truth ought in general to be applied to all. I ſhall only remark on this ſubject, that, in order to make a diſcovery, we muſt neceſſarily have in our memories the objects from which truth is to be drawn.

If

If the reader recollects what I have ſaid, in the example I have juſt given, and in conſequence of it would know whether all men well organized are really endued with an attention ſufficient to raiſe their minds to the moſt lofty ideas, he may compare the operations of the mind in making a diſcovery, or when he ſimply follows the demonſtration of a truth, and examine which of theſe operations ſuppoſes the moſt attention.

In purſuing the demonſtration of a propoſition in geometry, it is of no uſe to recal many objects to the mind; the maſter is to lay before his pupil thoſe proper to give the ſolution of the problem he propoſes to him. But whether a man diſcovers a truth, or purſues a demonſtration, he ought, in both caſes, to obſerve equally the relations that ſubſiſt between the objects preſented to him by his memory or his maſter. Now, as he cannot without great hazard preſent only to the mind the ideas neceſſary to the diſcovery of truth, and conſider none but preciſely the faces he ought to compare with each other, it is evident, that in order to make a diſcovery, he ought to recollect a multitude of ideas foreign to the object of enquiry, and to form a number of uſeleſs compariſons; compariſons whoſe multitude may deter him. He muſt then ſpend much more time in diſcovering a truth than in purſuing a demonſtration: but the diſcovery of this truth does not require, in any one inſtance, a greater effort of attention than is ſuppoſed in the purſuit of a demonſtration.

To be aſſured of this, let us obſerve a ſtudent in geometry, and we ſhall find, that he muſt apply ſo much the greater attention in conſidering the geometrical figures the maſter places before him, as theſe objects being leſs familiar than thoſe preſented to him by his memory, his mind is at once employed by a double care, in conſidering theſe figures, and in diſcovering the relations that ſubſiſt between them: whence it follows, that the attention neceſſary to purſue the demonſtration of a propoſition in geometry is ſufficient for the diſcovery of truths of a very different kind. 'Tis true, in this laſt caſe, the attention ought to be continued: but this continuance is properly no more than the repetition of the ſame acts of attention. Beſides, if all men, as I ſaid above, are capable of learning to read, and of learning their mother tongue, they are all capable not only of the lively, but of the continued attention requiſite for the diſcovery of truth.

What continuity of attention muſt he uſe to know his letters, to aſſemble them, form them into ſyllables, or to unite in his memory objects of a different nature, that have only an arbitrary connection with each other, as the words Oak, Grandeur, Love, which have no real connection with the things, idea, or ſenſation they expreſs? It is then certain that if, by the continuance of attention, that is, by the frequent repetition of the ſame acts of attention, all men may ſucceſſively engrave in their memory every word in a language, they are all endued with a force and continuity of attention neceſſary to raiſe thoſe great ideas whoſe diſcovery places them in the rank of illuſtrious men.

But it may be aſked, if all men are endued with the attention neceſſary to excel in one kind of ſtudy, when a contrary habit has not rendered them incapable of it, it is certain that this attention is more difficult to one man than to others: now to what other cauſe can this greater or leſs difficulty of attention

tion be attributed, if it be not owing to a greater or leſs perfection of organization?

Before I make a direct reply to this objection, I ſhall obſerve, that attention is not foreign to the nature of man; that in general, when we believe attention difficult to be ſupported, it is becauſe we take the fatigue of wearineſs and impatience for the fatigue of application. In reality, if there be no man without deſires, there is no man without attention. When it is reduced to a habit, it becomes a want: what renders it fatiguing is the motive that determines us to it: if that be neceſſity, indigence, or fear, attention is then painful; but if it be the hope of pleaſure, attention itſelf then becomes a pleaſure. Lay before a man two written copies equally difficult to read; the one a verbal proceſs at law, and the other a letter from his miſtreſs; and who can doubt that the attention would not be as painful in the firſt caſe as it would be agreeable in the ſecond? From this obſervation we may eaſily explain, why attention is more painful to ſome than to others. It is not neceſſary for this purpoſe, that there ſubſiſts between them any difference of organization: it is ſufficient to ſhew, that here the pain of attention is always greater or leſs in proportion to the greater or leſs degree of the pleaſure which each conſiders as the reward of his labour. Now if the ſame objects are never of the ſame value in the opinion of different men, it is evident, that in propoſing to different men the ſame objects as a reward, they have not an equal reward in view; and being obliged to make the ſame effort of attention, theſe efforts muſt conſequently be more painful to ſome than to others. We may then reſolve the problem of a greater or leſs caſe of attention, without having recourſe to the myſtery of an unequal perfection in the organs which produced it. But on admitting, in this reſpect, a difference in the organization of men; in ſuppoſing, I ſay, they have a warm deſire of inſtruction, a deſire of which all men are ſuſceptible, there are none but will then find that they are endued with a capacity of attention neceſſary to diſtinguiſh themſelves in an art. In fact, if the deſire of happineſs is common to all men, and if it is their moſt lively ſenſation, it is evident that every man will do whatever is in his power to obtain it: now every man, as I have juſt proved, is capable of a degree of attention ſufficient to enable him to obtain the moſt noble ideas. He will then make uſe of this capacity for attention, when by the legiſlation of his country, his particular taſte, education, or happineſs ſhall become the prize to be obtained by his attention. It will, I believe, be difficult to reſiſt this concluſion; eſpecially if, as I can prove, it is not even neceſſary for a man to give all the attention of which he is capable to be ſuperior in one kind of ſtudy.

Not to leave any doubt with reſpect to this truth, let us conſult experience, and examine the men of genius: they have all experienced, that it is not the moſt painful efforts of attention that they owe the fineſt verſes of their poems, the moſt ſingular ſituations in their romances, and the moſt learned and inſtructive of their philoſophical works. They confeſs that they owe them to the happy concourſe of certain objects which chance has placed before their eyes, or preſented to their memory; and by comparing theſe, they have produced thoſe noble verſes, thoſe ſtiking ſituations, and thoſe grand philoſophical ideas: ideas which the mind always conceives with a greater promptitude and facility,

in proportion to their being more true and general. Now, if in every work theſe fine ideas, of whatſoever kind they may be, are in a manner the ſtrokes of genius; if the art employed about them is not a work of time and patience, and what is called the labour of the brain, it is thence certain, that genius is leſs the price of attention than a gift of chance, which preſents theſe happy ideas to all men, among whom thoſe alone who are fond of glory are attentive to ſeize them. If chance is generally acknowledged to be the author of moſt diſcoveries in almoſt all the arts, and if in ſpeculative ſciences its power is leſs ſenſibly perceived, it is not perhaps leſs real; it no leſs preſides at the opening of the fineſt ideas. Thus they are not, as I have juſt ſaid, the price of the moſt painful efforts of the attention; and it may be aſſerted, that the attention required in following the order of ideas, the manner of expreſſing them, and the art of paſſing from one ſubject to another (b) is, beyond all contradiction, much more fatiguing; and that, in ſhort, the moſt painful of all is the compariſon of objects that are not familiar to us. For this reaſon the philoſopher capable of ſix or ſeven hours application to ſtudy could not, without a very painful attention ſpend ſix or ſeven hours, either in examining witneſſes, or making a faithful and correct copy of a manuſcript: hence it is evident, that the beginning of every ſcience is always the moſt thorny. It is only owing to the habit we have acquired of conſidering certain objects, that we owe not only the facility with which we compare them, but alſo the juſt and rapid compariſons we draw from conſidering them with reſpect to each other. Thus at the firſt glance of the eye, the painter perceives in a picture the faults with reſpect to the deſign and colouring: thus the ſhepherd, accuſtomed to conſider his ſheep, finds reſemblances and differences between them, that makes him know them; and thus we are properly maſter only of the ſubject on which we have long meditated. It is in proportion to the greater or leſs degree of application with which we examine a ſubject, that our ideas of it are profound or ſuperficial. It appears that works that have long employed our thoughts, and been long in compoſing have greater ſtrength; and that in thoſe of ſciences, as in mechanics, we gain in ſtrength, what is loſt in time.

But not to ramble from my ſubject: I ſhall repeat again, if the moſt painful attention is that which ſuppoſes the compariſon of objects leaſt familiar to us, and if that attention is required in the ſtudy of languages, every man being capable of learning his own language, all are conſequently endued with a ſtrength and power of attention ſufficient to raiſe them to the rank of illuſtrious men.

There only remains, as a laſt proof of this truth, to recollect here, that error, as I have ſaid, in my firſt eſſay, is always accidental, and not inherent in the particular nature of certain minds; and that all our falſe judgments are the effects of our paſſions, or of our ignorance: whence it follows, that all men are, by nature, endued with a mind equally juſt; and that on its preſenting to them the ſame objects, they would all form the ſame judgments. Now as the word a Sound Mind includes in its moſt extenſive ſignification

(b) Tantum ſeries juncturaque pollet.

all

all minds; it follows from what I ſaid above, that all whom I call well organized, being born with a ſound mind, they have all a natural power of acquiring the moſt lofty ideas (c).

But it is replied, if this be the caſe, why do we ſee ſo few illuſtrious men? It is becauſe ſtudy is attended with ſome trouble; and to conquer a diſinclination to ſtudy, as I have already inſinuated, a perſon ought to be animated by ſome paſſion.

In early youth, the fear of puniſhment is ſufficient to force boys to ſtudy: but in a more advanced age, when they do not meet with the ſame treatment, they muſt be induced to undergo the fatigue of application, by the warmth of ſome paſſion, as for inſtance, the love of glory. The force of attention is then proportioned to the force of the paſſion. Let us conſider children: if they make a more equal progreſs in learning their own tongue than in a foreign language, it is becauſe they are excited to it, by more equal neceſſities; that is, by eating and drinking, by the love of play, and by the deſire of making known the objects of their love and averſion: now wants nearly equal muſt produce effects that are alſo nearly equal. On the contrary, as the progreſs in a foreign language depends both on the method uſed by the maſter; the fear with which he inſpires his ſcholars, and the intereſt parents take in the ſtudies of their children; it is evident, that their progreſs depending on ſuch various cauſes, ſo combined and diverſified, muſt for this reaſon be very unequal. Whence I conclude, that the great inequality of genius obſervable amongſt men depends, perhaps, on their unequal deſire of inſtruction. But this deſire, it is ſaid, is the effect of a paſſion: now if we are obliged only to nature for the greater or leſs ſtrength of our paſſions, it follows from thence that the mental abilities ought conſequently to be conſidered as a gift of nature.

To this point, which is really delicate and deciſive, the whole queſtion is reduced. To reſolve it, we muſt know both the paſſions and their effects, and enter into this ſubject in a very deep and circumſtantial manner.

(c) It muſt always be remembered, as I have ſaid in my ſecond diſcourſe, that ideas, in their own nature, are neither lofty, great nor little; that frequently the diſcovery of an idea called little does not ſuppoſe a leſs genius, than the diſcovery of one that is lofty: that it is ſometimes as neceſſary to ſeize with delicacy the ridicule of a character, as to perceive the miſtakes of government; and that if by way of preference the name of great and lofty is applied to diſcoveries of the laſt kind, it is from our meaning by the epithets lofty, great, and little, only ſuch ideas as are more or leſs generally intereſting.

CHAP. V.

Of the Powers that act upon the Soul.

EXperience alone can diſcover what theſe powers are. It informs us that lazineſs is natural to man; that attention gives him pain and fatigue (a); that he gravitates inceſſantly towards repoſe as bodies towards a centre. He there remains ſtrongly fixed, if he is not every moment repelled by two kinds of powers that counterbalance his lazineſs and inertia; on the one hand by ſtrong paſſions, and on the other by hatred and laſſitude.

Laſſitude, or weariſomneſs of inaction, is a more general and powerful ſpring than is imagined. Of all pains, this is doubtleſs the leaſt; but nevertheleſs it is one. The deſire of happineſs makes us always conſider the abſence of pleaſure as an evil. We would have the neceſſary intervals that ſeparate the lively pleaſures always connected with the gratification of our natural wants, filled up with ſome of thoſe ſenſations that are always agreeable when they are not painful: we therefore conſtantly deſire new impreſſions, in order to put us in mind every inſtant of our exiſtance; becauſe every one of theſe informations affords us pleaſure. Thus the ſavage, as ſoon as he has ſatisfied his wants, runs to the banks of a river, where the rapid ſucceſſion of the waves that drive each other forward make every moment new impreſſions upon him: for this reaſon, we prefer the ſight of objects in motion to thoſe at reſt: and we proverbially ſay, that fire makes company; that is, it helps us to deliver us from laſſitude.

It is this neceſſity of being put in motion, and the kind of inquietude produced in the mind by the abſence of any impreſſion, that contains in part the principle of the inconſtancy and improvement of the human mind, and which forcing it to actuate all our ſenſes muſt, after a revolution of an infinite number of ages, invent and carry to perfection the arts and ſciences, and at length lead to the decay of taſte (b).

(a) The Hottentots will neither reaſon nor think. "Thought, ſay they, is the "ſcourge of life." How many Hottentots are there among us? Theſe people are entirely devoted to indolence: to deliver themſelves from all kinds of employment, they deprive themſelves of every thing they can poſſibly do without.

The native inhabitants of the Caribbee iſlands have the ſame averſion to thought and labour; they would ſooner die with hunger than prepare their caſſava bread, or make their pot boil. Their wives do every thing: they labour only one or two hours a day in cultivating the earth, and ſpend the reſt of their time in their hammocks. If any perſon deſired to buy their bed, they will ſell it very cheap in the morning; for they will not give themſelves the trouble of thinking whether they ſhall want it at night.

(b) Perhaps by comparing the ſlow progreſs of the human mind with the preſent ſtate of perfection of the arts and ſciences, we may form a judgment of the antiquity of the world. A new ſyſtem of chronology might be made on this plan, that would be at leaſt as ingenious as thoſe that have hitherto appeared: but the execution would require great delicacy and ſagacity of mind from him who undertook it.

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In fact, if the impreſſions made upon us are the more agreeable in proportion as they are more lively, and of the duration if the ſame impreſſion blunts its vivacity, we muſt be deſirous of thoſe new impreſſions that produce in our minds the pleaſure of ſurprize: artiſts ambitious of pleaſing us, and exciting in us theſe kinds of impreſſions, ought therefore, after having in part exhauſted the combinations of beauty, to ſubſtitute in its room the ſingular, becauſe it makes a newer, and conſequently a more lively impreſſion upon us. This, in polite nations occaſions the decay of taſte.

To know ſtill better the effect of laſſitude upon us, and what the activity of this principle (c), is capable of producing, let us obſerve mankind with an attentive eye; and we ſhall perceive, that the fear of laſſitude prompts moſt of them to thought and action. In order to ſave themſelves from it, at the hazard of too ſtrong, and conſequently diſagreeable impreſſions, men ſearch with the greateſt eagerneſs for every thing capable of putting them in motion: it is this deſire that makes the common people run to ſee an execution, and the people of faſhion a play; and it is the ſame motive in a gloomy devotion, and even in the auſtere exerciſes of pennance, that frequently affords old women a remedy againſt the tireſomeneſs of inaction; for God, who by all poſſible means endeavours to bring ſinners to himſelf, commonly uſes with reſpect to them that of laſſitude.

But eſpecially at the age when the ſtrong paſſions are enchained, either by morals, or the form of government, the weariſomneſs of inaction plays its greateſt part: it then becomes the univerſal mover.

At court and about the throne it is the fear of laſſitude, joined to the ſmalleſt degree of ambition, that produces lazy courtiers of thoſe who are but little ambitious. This makes them conceive little deſires, form little intrigues, little cabals, little crimes, to obtain little places proportioned to the littleneſs of their paſſions: this makes a Sejanus, but never an Octavius; tho' it is however ſufficient to raiſe them to thoſe poſts, where they indeed enjoy the privilege of being inſolent, but ſearch in vain to ſecure themſelves from laſſitude.

Such are, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, both the active and inert forces which act on our ſouls; and in obedience to theſe two oppoſite forces, we in general wiſh to be moved, without taking the trouble of moving ourſelves. It is from this cauſe we deſire to know every thing, without being at the pains

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(c) Laſſitude, it is true, is not commonly very inventive; its ſpring is certainly too weak to enable us to execute grand enterprizes, and particularly to make us acquire great talents. It was not the languor of indolence that produced a Lycurgus, a Pelopidas, an Homer, an Archimedes, and a Milton; and we may aſſure ourſelves, that it is not the want of laſſitude that makes us want great men. However, it ſometimes produces great effects. It is ſometimes capable of arming princes, and of drawing them to battle; and when their firſt enterprizes are attended with ſucceſs, it may make them conquerors. War may become an employment which habit renders neceſſary. Charles XII. the only hero who was ever inſenſible to the pleaſures of love and of the table, was perhaps in part determined by this motive. But if laſſitude is capable of making a hero of this kind, it can never make a Cæſar nor a Cromwell; it required a ſtrong paſſion, to enable them to make the efforts of genius and ſkill neceſſary to clear the ſpace that ſeparated them from the throne.

of learning, and therefore being more obſequious to opinion than to reaſon, which in every caſe would force us to undergo the fatigue of enquiry: men, on their entering into the world, accept indiſcriminately all ideas preſented to them whether true or falſe(d); and why, in fine, being impelled by the flux and reflux

(d) Credulity is partly the effect of indolence. We have been habituated to believe a thing abſurd; the falſity of ſuch a belief is ſuſpected, but to be fully ſatisfied requires the fatigue of examination; thus we are not for undergoing; and thus chooſe rather to believe than examine. In ſuch a diſpoſition the moſt convincing proof of the falſity of an opinion will always appear inſufficient. Every weak reaſoning perſuades; every ridiculous ſtory is believed. I ſhall only produce one inſtance from Marini's account of Tonquin, "A religion, ſays this author, was to be given to the Tonquineſe, and that of the philoſopher Rama, in the Tonquin language called Thic-ca, was made choice of. Its ſuppoſed origin, which they firmly believe, is as follows. One day the mother of the God Thic-ca had a viſion of a white elephant, myſteriouſly formed in her mouth and coming out of her left ſide. The dream being ended, was realized, and ſhe delivered of Thic-ca, who no ſooner ſaw the light than he puts his mother to death; takes ſeven ſteps, marking the heaven with one finger and the earth with another; he boaſts of being the only ſaint, in heaven or on earth. At ſeventeen years of age he marries three wives; at nineteen he forſakes his wives, and his ſon withdraws to a mountain, where he is inſtructed by two demons A-la-la and Ca-la-la. He afterwards comes among the people, by whom he is received, not as a teacher but as a pagod, or idol: he has four-ſcore thouſand diſciples, among whom he ſelects five hundred, which number he afterward reduces to one hundred, and theſe again to ten, who are called, the ten great ones. This is what is told the Tonquineſe and is what they believe, tho' informed by a private tradition, that theſe ten great ones were his friends and confidants, and whom alone he did not deceive; for, after preaching his doctrine above forty-nine years, ſenſible of the approach of death, he called together all his diſciples, and frankly addreſſed them in the following manner: Hitherto I have deceived you; all that I told you is mere fiction: the only truth I have now to teach you is, that from nothing all came, and to it all ſhall return. Let me however adviſe you to keep my ſecret, and externally conform to my religion: there is no other way to keep the people in due ſubjection to you." Though this confeſſion of Thic-ca on his death-bed, be pretty generally known in Toquin, yet the worſhip of that impoſtor ſtill ſubſiſts, from a willingneſs of believing what they are accuſtomed to believe. Some ſcholaſtic ſubtilties, to which indolence gives the force of proof, have been ſufficient for the diſciples of Thic-ca thro' a cloud to aver this confeſſion, and keep the Tonquineſe in their belief. The ſame laborious diſciples have wrote five thouſand volumes on the life of this Thic-ca. They maintain that he performed miracles; that immediately after his birth he aſſumed ſucceſſively four-ſcore thouſand different forms; that his laſt metamorphoſis was into a white elephant; and that hence is derived the extraordinary reſpect paid all over India to ſuch animals. Of all auguſt titles, that of king of the white elephant is moſt valued among Indian monarchs, and the king of Siam is ſtiled, the king of the white elephant. The diſciples of Thic-ca add, that there are ſix worlds; that on our dying in this we are born again in another; that the good man thus paſſes from one world to the other; and that after this rotation, the wheel returns to its firſt poſition, and he is a ſecond time born in this world: whence, at the ſeventh time he departs in the plenitude of purity and perfection, and then having attained the utmoſt period of immutability finds himſelf exalted to the dignity of pagod or idol. They hold a paradiſe and likewiſe a hell, from which, as in moſt falſe religions, the only way of eſcaping is to reſpect and be liberal to the Bonzes, and build monaſteries. With regard to the devil, they relate, that he once had a diſpute with the idol of Tonquin, which ſhould be maſter of the earth. At laſt the devil agreed with the idol, that whatever

reflux of prejudices, now towards wiſdom, then towards folly, rational or irrational by mere accident, the ſlave of opinion is equally irrational in the eyes of the wiſe man, whether he maintains a truth, or advances an error. He is no better than the blind man who may accidentally tell the colour preſented to him.

Thus the ſoul appears to be moved by the paſſions and a hatred of laſſitude; by theſe it is rouſed from its natural tendency to reſt, and ſurmounts the Vis inertiæ, to which it is always inclined to yeild. But however certain this propoſition may appear, both in morality and natural philoſophy, opinions are always to be eſtabliſhed on facts and in the following chapter, I ſhall prove by inſtances, that it is the ſtrong paſſions alone, that prompt men to the execution of thoſe heroic actions, and give birth to thoſe grand ideas which are the aſtoniſhment and admiration of all ages.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Power of the Paſſions.

PAſſions are in the moral, what motion is in the natural world. If motion creates, deſtroys, preſerves, animates the whole, that without it every thing is dead: ſo the paſſions animate the moral world. It is avarice which conducts ſhips over the deſerts of the ocean; it is pride which fills up vallies, levels mountains, hews itſelf a paſſage through rocks, raiſes the pyramids of Memphis, digs the lake Mœris, and caſts the Coloſſus of Rhodes. Love, it is ſaid, formed the crayon for the firſt deſigner. In a country where revelation had never penetrated it was love, which, to ſooth the grief of a widow, rendered diſconſolate by the death of her young ſpouſe, intimated to her the ſyſtem of the immorality of the ſoul. It was the enthuſiaſm of gratitude which claſſed the benefactors of mankind among the Gods; which invented the falſe religions and ſuperſtitions, all of which, however, have not their ſource in ſuch noble paſſions as love and gratitude.

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ever it could cover with its robe ſhould be long to him. On which the idol procured a robe made of ſuch extent that it covered the whole earth, and the baffled devil was obliged to retire into the ſea, whence he ſometimes returns; but flies immediately on the ſight of the idol.

Whether theſe people had formerly any confuſed notion of our religion is not known; but one of the firſt articles of the creed of Thic-ca is, that there is an idol that ſaves mankind, and makes full ſatisfaction for their ſins; and who, in order to have a more adequate knowledge and a more tender ſenſe of the miſeries of mankind, aſſumed the human nature.

Kolbe relates, that among the Hottentots there are many who maintain the ſame doctrine, and believe that their God has viſibly appeared to their nation in the form of one of the moſt beautiful mien among them; but the generality conſider this tenet as a mere chimera, and pretend, that to metamorphoſe God into a man, is to make him act a part very unbecoming his majeſty. They pay him no worſhip; they ſay that God is good, and that our prayers are not regarded by him.

It is therefore to ſtrong paſſions that we owe the invention and wonders of arts; and conſequently they are to be conſidered as the germ productive of genius, and the powerful ſpring that carries men to great actions. But before we proceed, it may be proper to fix the idea I intend to convey by the word Strong Paſſion. If men in general ſpeak without underſtanding each other, it is owing to the obſcurity of words; to this cauſe (a) may be attributed the prolongation of the miracle wrought at the tower of Babel.

By the word Strong-Paſſion, I mean a paſſion, the object of which is ſo neceſſary to our happineſs that without the poſſeſſion of it life would be inſupportable. This was Omar's idea of the paſſion, when he ſaid, "Whoever "thou art, that loveſt liberty, deſireſt to be wealthy without riches, pow- "erful without ſubjects, a ſubject without a maſter; dare to contemn death: "kings will then tremble before thee, whilſt thou alone ſhalt fear no perſon."

It is indeed only paſſions carried to this degree of force that can execute the greateſt actions, defy dangers, pain, death and heaven itſelf.

Dicearchus, the general of Philip, in preſence of his whole army erects two altars, one to impiety, the other to injuſtice, ſacrifices on them, and marches againſt the Cyclades.

Some days before the aſſaſſination of Cæſar, conjugal love, united with a noble pride, prevailed on Portia to make an inciſion in her thigh, to ſhew the wound to her huſband; and at the ſame time to ſay to him, "Brutus you are "meditating ſome great deſign which you conceal from me. I never before "aſked you an indiſcreet queſtion: I knew that our ſex, however weak in "itſelf, gathers ſtrength by converſing with wiſe and virtuous men; and that "I was daughter to Cato, and ſpouſe to Brutus; but love rendered me ſo ti- "merous, that I miſtruſted my weakneſs. You ſee the eſſay I have made "of my fortitude: judge from this trial of pain, whether I am worthy of your "confidence."

It was the paſſion of honour and philoſophic fanaticiſm alone that could induce Timicha, the Pythagorean, in the midſt of torture, to bite off her tongue, that ſhe might not expoſe herſelf to reveal the ſecrets of her ſect.

Cato, when a child going with his tutor to Sylla's palace, at ſeeing the bloody heads of the proſcribed, aſked with impatience, the name of the monſter who had cauſed ſo many Roman citizens to be murdered. He was anſwered, it was Sylla: "How, ſays he, does Sylla murder thus, and is Sylla ſtill a live?" Yes, it was replied, the very name of Sylla diſarms our citizen. "O Rome, cried Cato, deplorable is thy fate, ſince within the vaſt com-

(a) For inſtance, if the word Red contains the ſeveral gradations from ſcarlet to carnation, let us ſuppoſe two men, one has ſeen only ſcarlet, and the other carnation, the firſt will very juſtly ſay, that red is a vivid colour; the other will be as poſitive, that it is a faint colour. For the like reaſon, two men may pronounce the word Will without underſtanding each other; for this word extends from the coldeſt to the moſt vehement degree of volition, which ſurmounts all obſtacles. It is with the word Paſſion, as with that of Underſtanding, its ſignification depends on the pronounciation. A man, who in a ſociety of ſhallow perſons is conſidered as weak may be concluded ſimple: it is otherwiſe with him who is looked upon as a perſon of tolerable parts by geniuſes of the firſt claſs; the choice of his company proves his ſuperiority to common men. Here he is a midling orator, but would be the firſt in any other ſociety.

paſs

" paſs of thy walls not a man of virtue can be found, and the arm of a fee-
" ble child is the only one that will oppoſe itſelf againſt tyranny!" Then turn-
ing towards his governor, " Give me, ſaid he, your ſword; I will conceal
" it under my robe, approach Sylla, and kill him. Cato lives, and Rome
" is again free (b)."

In what climates has not this virtuous love of one's country performed he-
roic actions? In China, an emperor being purſued by the victorious forces of
a private patriot, in order to oblige this victor to diſband his troops, had
recourſe to that ſuperſtitious reſpect, which in that country a ſon pays to the
orders of his mother. He diſpatched an officer, who approached her with his
drawn poiniard in his hand, told her peremptorily ſhe muſt comply or periſh.
" Does thy maſter, anſwered ſhe, with a diſdainful ſmile, flatter himſelf that
" I am ignorant of the tacit but ſacred conventions between the people and
" their ſovereigns, by which the people are to obey, and the kings to render
" them happy? He firſt broke the conventions. And thou, baſe tool of a
" tyrant, learn from a woman what in ſuch caſes is due to thy country."
Then ſnatching the poiniard from the officer's hand, plunged it in her breaſt;
ſaying, " Slave, if thou haſt ſtill any virtue, carry this bloody poiniard to my
" ſon; bid him revenge the nation, and puniſh the tyrant. He has now nothing
" to fear, no cautions to obſerve for me: he is now at liberty to be virtuous (c)."

If the generous pride, the paſſion of patriotiſm and glory, determine citizens
to ſuch heroic actions, with what reſolution and intrepidity do not the paſ-
ſions inſpire thoſe who aim at diſtinction in the arts and ſciences, and whom
Cicero calls, the peaceable heroes? It is from a deſire of glory, that the aſtro-
nomer is ſeen, on the icy ſummits of the Cordeleras, placing his inſtruments

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(b) It was the ſame Cato who, when re-
tiring to Utica, being urged to conſult the
oracle of Jupiter Ammon, anſwered, "Oracles
are for the fearful and the ignorant. The brave
man is independent of the Gods, and knows
when to live or die: he with compoſure offers
himſelf to his fate, whether it be known or
concealed." Cæſar, after having fallen into
the hands of pirates is ſtill the ſame man,
threatens them with death, and at landing
makes good his words.

(c) The paſſion of duty alſo animated Ab-
dalla's mother, when her ſon, being forſaken
by his friends, beſieged in a caſtle, and urged
to accept of an honourable capitulation of-
fered him by the Syrians, conſulted her
how he ſhould act, and ſhe gave him this
anſwer, " Son, when thou tookeſt up arms
" againſt the houſe of Ommiah, did'ſt thou
" think it was eſpouſing the cauſe of juſtice
" and virtue? Yes, anſwered he. O then,
" replied his mother, What cauſe is there
" for deliberation? Doſt thou not know
" that cowards only are ſwayed by fear? wilt
" thou be the contempt of the Ommites?
" and ſhall it be ſaid, that when thou waſt
" to determine between life and duty, thou
" didſt prefer the former?"

It is the ſame paſſion for glory that, when
the Roman army, periſhing with cold for
want of cloathing, was on the point of diſper-
ſing, brought to the aſſiſtance of Septiemus
Severus the philoſopher Antiochus, who,
ſtripping himſelf before the army leaped into a
heap of ſnow, at which the troops chearfully
perſevered in their duty.

Thraſea being one day counſelled to make
ſome ſubmiſſion to Nero, " How, ſaid he,
" ſhall I ſtoop ſo low to prolong my life a
" few days? No death is a debt: I'll diſ-
" charge it like a free man, and not pay it
" like a ſlave."

Veſpaſian, in a guſt of paſſion threatning
Helvidius with death, received this anſwer:
" Did I ever tell you I was immortal? By
" putting me to death, you will act in cha-
" racter like a tyrant; I like a citizen in re-
" ceiving it without fear."

in

in the midſt of ſnows and froſt; which conducts the botaniſt to the brinks of precipices in queſt of plants; which anciently carried the juvenile lovers of the ſciences into Egypt, Ethiopia and even into the Indies, for viſiting the moſt celebrated philoſophers, and acquiring from their converſation the principles of their doctrine.

How ſtrongly did this paſſion exert itſelf in Demoſthenes, who, for perfecting his pronunciation, uſed every day to ſtand on the ſea-ſhore, and with his mouth full of pebbles harangue the agitated waves! It was from the ſame deſire of glory, that the young Pythagoreans ſubmitted to a ſilence of three years, in order to habituate themſelves to recollection and meditation; it induced Democritus (d) to ſhun the diſtractions of the world, and retire among the tombs, to meditate on thoſe valuable truths, the diſcovery of which, as it is always very difficult, is alſo very little eſteemed: in fine it was this, that prompted Heraclitus to cede to his younger brother the throne of Epheſus (e), to which he had the right of primogeniture, that he might give himſelf up entirely to philoſophy; which made the Athletic improve his ſtrength, by denying himſelf the pleaſures of love; it was alſo from a deſire of popular aplauſe that certain antient prieſts renounced the ſame pleaſures, and often, as Boindin pleaſently obſerves of them, without any other recompence for their continence than the perpetual temptation it occaſions.

I have ſhewn that it is to the paſſions we owe moſt of the objects of our admiration; under their powerful influence we ſuſtain dangers, pain, and death; and that they animate us to take the boldeſt reſolutions.

I am now going to prove that, in critical occaſions, it is by their aſſiſtance only that great men are inſpired to ſay, and act, and do the beſt.

Let us here call to rememberance the memorable and celebrated ſpeech of Hannibal to his ſoldiers on the day of the battle of Ticinus; and we ſhall own that it could be inſpired only by his hatred of the Romans and his paſſion for glory. "Fellow ſoldiers, ſaid he, heaven aſſures me of the victory. Let the "Romans, not you, tremble. View this field of battle: it offers no retreat "for cowards: we all periſh, if any retire. What can be a more certain pledge "of triumph? What plainer indication of the protection of the Gods? They "have placed us between victory and death."

Can it be doubted that Sylla was not animated with theſe ſame paſſions, when Craſſus aſked an eſcort to go and raiſe new levies in the country of the Marſians, Sylla anſwered, "If you are afraid of the enemy, the eſcort I give you are "your fathers, brothers, relations, and friends, who, maſſacred by the tyrants, "cry for vengeance and expect it from you.

When the Macedonians, wearied with the toils of war, deſired Alexander to diſcharge them, it was pride and the love of glory that dictated to him this ſpirited anſwer, "Away ingrates, lazy cowards; I'll ſubdue the world with-"out you; Alexander will never want ſubjects and ſoldiers, where there are "men.

(d) Democritus was very rich, but he did not think this entitled him to neglect his mind, and to live in a flattered ſtupidity.

(e) Miſon, ſon of the tyrant of Chenes, alſo renounced his right to his father's ſceptre; and being diſengaged from all public duties, he uſed to retire among the ſolitary rocks, to indulge himſelf in profound reflections!

It is only from men of ſtrong paſſions that ſuch ſpeeches can be expected. Genius itſelf, in ſuch caſes, can never ſupply the want of ſentiment. We are ignorant of the language of paſſions we never felt.

Beſides, it is not only in a ſingle act, as eloquence in the paſſions, every kind are to be eſteemed as the germ productive of ſuperior underſtanding: it is they, which keeping a perpetual fermentation in our ideas, fertilize in us the ſame ideas, which, in frigid ſouls, are barren, and would be no more than ſeed ſcattered on a rock.

It is the paſſions which, having ſtrongly fixed our attention on the object of our deſire, cauſes us to view it under appearances unknown to other men; and which conſequently prompt heroes to plan and execute thoſe hardy enterprizes which, till ſucceſs has proved the propriety of them, appear ridiculous, and indeed muſt appear ſo to the multitude.

The cauſe, ſays the cardinal de Richlieu, why a timorous mind perceives an impoſſibility in the moſt ſimple projects, when to an elevated mind, the moſt arduous ſeems eaſy is, becauſe, before the latter the mountains ſink, and before the former mole-hills are metamorphoſed into mountains.

It is, in effect, only a ſtrong paſſion, which, being more perſpicuous than good ſenſe, can teach us to diſtinguiſh the extraordinary from the impoſſible, which men of ſenſe are ever confounding; becauſe, not being animated by ſtrong paſſions, theſe ſenſible perſons never riſe above mediocrity: a propoſition which I am now going to demonſtrate, in order to prove the great ſuperiority of the man of ſtrong paſſions above any other, and that in reality great paſſions only can produce great men.

CHAP. VII.

Of the ſuperiority of the mind in men of ſtrong paſſions above the men of ſenſe.

IF antecedently to ſucceſs great geniuſes of every kind are conſidered as romantic by the men of ſenſe, it is becauſe the latter, incapable of any thing great, cannot conceive the exiſtence of the means great men employ in the execution of great things.

It is on this account, that great men muſt of conſequence be derided, till they excite admiration. When Parmenio, urged by Alexander to deliver his opinion on Darius's propoſals of peace, ſaid, "Were I Alexander, I would "accept them;" the Macedonians doubtleſs, till victory juſtified that prince's apparent raſhneſs, were better pleaſed with Parmenio's motion, than with Alexander's anſwer: "And I alſo were I Parmenio." One characterizes, the man of ſenſe, the other an extraordinary man. Now, the firſt claſs greatly exceeds in number that of the ſecond. It is therefore evident, that had not the ſon of Philip already gained the reſpect of the Macedonians by his ſignal exploits, and habituated them to extraordinary enterprizes, his anſwer muſt have appeared abſolutely ridiculous. None of them would have perceived the motive for it, either in the interior conſciouſneſs which this hero could have of the ſuperiority of his courage and abilities, and the advantage both theſe qualities gave him over a luxurious, effeminate people like the Perſians; or, laſtly, in the knowledge he had acquired, both of the temper of the Mace-

donians and his aſcendency over their minds, and conſequently of the facility of communicating to them, by his geſtures, looks, and words, that intrepidity which animated himſelf. Yet theſe were the various motives which, inforced by an ardent thirſt of glory, made him, with reaſon, conclude the victory much more certain than it appeared to Parmenio, and conſequently inſpired him with a bolder anſwer.

When Tamerlane fixed his engines before the ramparts of Smyrna, from which the forces of the Ottoman empire had lately been obliged to retire with great loſs, he was aware of the difficulty of his enterprize; he well knew that he was attacking a place which the chriſtian powers might continually ſupply with proviſions: but the paſſion for glory which excited him to the enterprize, ſuggeſted to him the means of executing it. He fills up the large abyſs of the waters, checks the ſeas, and baffles the European fleets by a dyke; diſplays his victorious ſtandards on the breaches of Smyrna, and ſhews the aſtoniſhed world, that nothing is impoſſible to great men (a).

When Lycurgus formed a plan for making Lacedemon a republic of heroes, he did not proceed by inſenſible alterations, according to the ſlow and therefore ſteady ſtep of what is called, wiſdom. This great man, heated by a paſſion for virtue, perceived that by ſpeeches, or ſuppoſed oracles, he could inſpire his countrymen with the ſame ſentiments that glowed in himſelf; and that by ſeizing the firſt inſtant of ardour, he might change the conſtitution of the govenment, and bring about, in the manners of that people, a ſudden revolution, which in the common methods of prudence would have required many years. He knew that paſſions are like volcanos, whoſe ſudden eruptions alter the channel of a river, which art could not have diverted, but by digging another bed for it; and conſequently, not till after a long ſucceſſion of time and prodigious expence. By this means, he ſucceeded in a plan, perhaps the boldeſt ever undertaken, and which would have been too difficult for any ſenſible man, who, deriving that title only from his incapacity of being excited by ſtrong paſſions, is alſo incapable of inſpiring them.

Men of theſe paſſions, being intelligent judges in the various methods of kindling the fire of enthuſiaſm, have often had recourſe to ſuch, which ſenſible perſons, for want of knowing this part of the human heart, have before the ſucceſs always conſidered as puerile and ridiculous.

Such was the ſtratagem of Pericles, who, when marching towards a ſuperior enemy, in order to make a hero of every ſoldier, conceals, in a dark wood a man of an extraordinary ſtature, ſeated in a car, drawn by four white horſes, he ſuddenly iſſues forth covered with a gorgeous mantle, on his legs glittering buſkins, and his head adorned with radiant treſſes; thus, he rapidly drives along the front of the army calling out, "Pericles, the victory is thine; I promiſe "it thee!"

Such was the method taken by Epaminondas for rouzing the courage of the Thebans; he cauſed one night, the arms hanging in a temple, to be ſe-

(a) The ſame thing may be ſaid of Guſtavus, who, at the head of his army and artillery, availing himſelf of the time when the winter had conſolidated the ſurface of the water, he croſſed the frozen ſeas for making a deſcent in Seeland. He knew as well as his officers, that his deſcent might be eaſily oppoſed; but he alſo knew that a wiſe temerity ſeldom fails of diſconcerting the foreſight of common men; that the boldneſs of the enterprizes often ſecures their ſucceſs; and that there are caſes when the higheſt boldneſs is the higheſt prudence.

cretly removed, and perſuaded the ſoldiers that the patron-gods of Thebes had made uſe of them in order to come armed the next day, and join in battle with them, againſt their enemy.

Such, laſtly, was the order given by Ziſka on his death-bed, when, ſtill breathing the moſt furious hatred againſt the catholics, who had perſecuted him, he recommends to his partizans, that immediately after his death, they ſhould flea him, and of his ſkin make a drum, aſſuring them of the victory every time they ſhould beat this drum in their encounters with the catholics; and this promiſe, ſeemingly ſo chimerical, was verified by conſtant ſucceſſes.

Thus it is ſeen, that the moſt deciſive means, the beſt adapted for producing great effects, ever unknown to thoſe who are called men of ſenſe, are diſcernible only by men of ſtrong paſſions, who, in the circumſtances of thoſe heroes would have had the like ſentiments.

Without the reſpect due to the reputation of the great Conde, would it be thought, that a project of that prince for recording in every regiment the memorable actions and ſayings of the ſoldiers, ſhould prove the ſeed of emulation in the troops? Does not the inexecution of this project convince us how little its uſefulneſs was perceived? How few, like the celebrated chevalier Folard, are ſenſible of the power of ſpeeches on the ſoldiery? Does every body equally perceive all the beauty of that ſaying of the duke de Vendome; when, ſeeing a body of his troops flying, whilſt the officers omitted nothing to rally them, he throws himſelf among the fugitives, calling out to the officers, "Let the ſoldiers alone, this is not the place, but yonder," (pointing to a tree about a hundred paces off) "whither this corps is going to form again." Here the ſoldiers courage was perceiveable; he thus revived in them the paſſions of ſhame and honour, which they flattered themſelves they ſtill retained in his eyes. By this reſource alone could they have been ſtopped, and thus they were again led on to action and to victory.

Now can it be queſtioned ſuch a ſpeech had not its origin in the temper; and that in general, all the ways made uſe of by great men for kindling in others the fire of enthuſiaſm have not been ſuggeſted to them by their paſſions? Where is the ſenſible man who, for increaſing the confidence and reſpect of the Macedonians, would have allowed Alexander to term himſelf the ſon of Jupiter Ammon? Would have put Numa on feigning a private commerce with the nymph Egeria? Would have adviſed Zamolxis, Zaleuxus, and Mneves to pretend themſelves inſpired by Veſta, Minerva, or Mercury? Marius to have among his retinue a fortune-teller? Sertorius to conſult his hind? And laſtly, Who like the count de Dunois, would, for checking the progreſs of the Engliſh, have put the ſword into the hands of a country girl?

Few extend their thoughts beyond the common mode of thinking; and ſtill ſmaller is the number of thoſe who dare (b) execute and ſpeak what they think. If ſenſible men attempted to put ſuch methods in practice, they would never be happy in the application, for want of a certain experimental acquaintance

(b) Yet by theſe alone is the human mind improved. When it is not a caſe of government, where the ſlighteſt faults may be productive of national evils, but only a ſcientifical point, the very errors of geniuſes deſerve the public applauſe and gratitude; for in ſciences an infinite number of men muſt be miſtaken, that others may no longer be miſtaken. This line of Martial is applicable to them,

Si non erraſſet, fecerat ille minus.

with the paſſions. They muſt follow beaten paths; if they forſake them, they bewilder themſelves. Indolence is always the predominant quality in a man of ſenſe: he has nothing of that activity of ſoul, by which a great man in power forms new ſprings for moving the world, or ſows the ſeeds of future events. It is only to the man of paſſion, and him who thirſts after glory, that the book of futurity is open.

At the battle of Marathon, Themiſtocles was the only man of all the Greeks, who foreſaw the fight of Salamine, and who by exerciſing the Athenians in naval affairs, prepared them for victory.

When Cato the cenſor, a man whoſe ſenſe exceeded his ſagacity, joined the ſenate determined to deſtroy Carthage, why did Scipio alone oppoſe the ruin of that city? Becauſe he conſidered Carthage both as a rival worthy of Rome, and as a dyke for oppoſing the torrent of vices and corruptions then breaking into Italy. Employed in the politic ſtudy of hiſtory, habituated into meditation, and that laborious attention which a paſſion for glory alone can render us capable, he attained a kind of divination. Accordingly he predicted all the misfortunes that would fall on Rome, the very moment when the miſtreſs of the world erected her throne on the ruins of all the monarchies of the univerſe; he in every country ſaw a Marius and a Sylla; and when the Romans could perceive only triumphal palms, and hear the ſhouts of victory, he heard the proclamations of the ſanguinary tables of proſcription. That people were then like ſailors, who, when the ſea is ſmooth, and the zephires gently ſwell the ſails and dimple the ſurface of the ocean, abandon themſelves to levity and mirth, while the attentive pilot beholds at the very extremity of the horizon the ſtorm which will ſoon throw the deep into a ferment.

If the Roman ſenate ſlighted Scipio's advice, it is becauſe very few, by the knowledge of the paſt and preſent, ſee into futurity (c); it is becauſe ſtates, like the oak, the growth and decay of which is inſenſible to the ephemerical inſects living under its ſhade, ſeem to them as it were in a ſtate of immobility; and this apparent immobility they rather believe as being moſt flattering to their indolence, which thus thinks itſelf diſcharged from the ſollicitude of foreſight and precaution.

It is in morality as in phyſics: the people think the ocean conſtantly chained within its bed, whereas the philoſopher ſees it ſucceſſively diſcover and overflow vaſt tracts, and ſhips traverſing thoſe plains which were lately furrowed by the plough. The people behold with admiration the even ſummits of ſtupendous mountains; but the philoſopher ſees their aſpiring tops, gradually ruined by time tumbling down into the vallies, and filling them with their fragments. But to view the moral univerſe, like the natural, in a ſucceſſive and perpetual deſtruction and reproduction, and thence to diſcern the remote cauſes of the overthrow of ſtates, is the gift only of ſuch as are inured to application. It is eagle-eyed paſſion which penetrates into the dark abyſs of futurity: indifference is born blind and ſtupid. In a ſerene ſky and pure air, the inhabitant of the town does not foreſee the tempeſt: it is the attentive

(c) A ſlight preſent good, frequently inebriates, a nation, that in its blindneſs it exclaims againſt the eminent genius who, in this ſlight preſent good, foreſees many ſubſtantial evils. They imagine that in branding him as a malecontent, virtue puniſhes vice; whereas generally it is only folly laughing at judgment.

and intereſted eye of the huſbandman that beholds, with terror, inſenſible exhalations riſing from the ſurface of the earth, condenſing in the air, and overſpreading it with thoſe clouds which will ſoon diſcharge themſelves in dreadful lightnings and deſolating hail, to the utter ruin of his promiſing crops.

If every paſſion be particularly examined, it will be found, that all are very ſagacious in the purſuit of their objects; that they alone can ſome time perceive the cauſe of effects which the ignorant attribute to chance; conſequently that they alone can curtail, and perhaps one day totally deſtroy the empire of this chance; of which each diſcovery neceſſarily contracts the limits.

If the ideas and actions ariſing from ſuch paſſions as avarice and love, are in general little valued, it is not that theſe ideas and actions do not often require great underſtanding and a multitude of combinations; but becauſe both the one and the other are either indifferent or detrimental to the public, which, as I have proved in the preceding diſcourſe, confers the appellations of virtuous or ingenious only on ſuch actions and ideas as are uſeful to it. Now, of all paſſions, the love of glory is that alone which is never at a loſs, that can always inſpire ſuch actions and ideas. It was this which inflamed an eaſtern monarch when he cried out: "Wretched are the ſovereigns of ſlaves! alas! the joys of juſt praiſe, which ſo delights the gods and heroes, are not made for them! Ye nations, added he, who have baſely parted with the right of publicly blaming your maſters, you have thereby loſt the right of praiſing them: the panegyric of the ſlave is ſuſpicious, and his unfortunate ſovereign remains always in ignorance, whether he deſerves eſteem or contempt. How painful is this uncertainty to a noble ſoul!"

Such ſentiments always ſuppoſe an ardent paſſion for glory. This paſſion is the ſoul of men of genius and talents in every kind; to this deſire they owe the enthuſiaſm they have for their art, and which they ſometimes carry ſo far, as to conſider it as the only occupation worthy the mind of man; an opinion, for which, ſenſible perſons call them mad-men; but they are conſidered in another light by the knowing, who, in the cauſe of their madneſs, diſcern that of their abilities and ſucceſs.

The concluſion of this chapter is, that the men of ſenſe, thoſe idols of the common people, are always very inferior to the men of paſſion; and that it is the ſtrong paſſions which, reſcuing us from ſloth, can alone impart to us that continued attention productive of ſuperior intellects. All that remains to confirm this truth is, to ſhew in the following chapter, that even they who are juſtly ranked among illuſtrious perſonages, when no longer ſupported by the ardour of paſſion inſtantly ſink into the claſs of the moſt ordinary men.

CHAP. VIII.

On Stupidity, the conſequence of the ceſſation of Paſſions.

THIS propoſition is a neceſſary conſequence of the former. In effect, if a man animated with the moſt violent deſire of eſteem, and as ſuch capable of the ſtrongeſt paſſion, finds himſelf able to ſatisfy this deſire, he will ſoon ceaſe to be animated with that paſſion, it being the nature of every deſire to languiſh and die away, unleſs nouriſhed by hope. Now, the ſame cauſe

which

which extinguiſhes in him the paſſion for eſteem will neceſſarily kill in him the germ of ſuperior intellects.

Suppoſe perſons no leſs ambitious of public eſteem than the Turennes, the Condes, the Deſcartes, the Corneilles, the Richlieus, were made receivers of a tax, or the like; this ſtation, depriving them of all hopes of glory, they would want even the common underſtanding neceſſary for ſuch employments. Little adapted to the ſtudies of edicts and tarifs, they would remain unqualified for a poſt odious to the public; they would be filled with averſion and diſguſt for a ſcience, in which he who has acquired the moſt profound and extenſive knowledge, and who conſequently retired to reſt, in his own opinion, very learned and very reſpectable, may awake very ignorant and very uſeleſs, ſhould the government have thought fit to ſuppreſs, or incorporate theſe duties. Totally given up to the Vis inertiæ, ſuch perſons will ſoon become incapable of any kind of application.

This is the reaſon why, in the management of an inferior poſt, men born for great things are often found inferior to the moſt ſhallow underſtandings. Veſpaſian, who on the throne, was the admiration of the Romans, would, whilſt Pretor have been the object of their contempt (a). The eagle, which in its bold flight pierces the clouds, ſkims the ſurface of the earth with a leſs rapidity than the ſwallow. To deſtroy the animating paſſion in a man is to deprive him at once of all his capacity; in this, Sampſon's hair ſeems to be the emblem of paſſion; that being cut off, Sampſon was reduced to a common man.

To confirm this truth by a ſecond example, let us take a view of thoſe eaſtern uſurpers, endued with amazing boldneſs, neceſſarily blended great abilities; let us enquire, why moſt of them, when ſeated on the throne, ſhewed but little genius; why, very much inferior to the weſtern uſurpers, there is ſcarce one, as the form of the Aſiatic governments ſufficiently proves, who can be accounted a legiſlator: not that they always delighted in the calamities of their ſubjects, but becauſe having once obtained the crown, the object of their deſire was fulfilled; becauſe the puſilanimity, the ſubjection, and obedience of a ſlaviſh people, enſuring them of the poſſeſſion, the paſſion which had raiſed them to the empire ceaſed to animate them; that, being now without motives of a power to induce them to bear the fatigue of attention implied in the diſcovery and eſtabliſhment of good laws, they are, as I have ſaid above, in the caſe of thoſe men of ſenſe, who, for want of a ſpirited deſire, have never taken the pains neceſſary to free themſelves from the delights of ſloth. If, on the contrary, ſeveral weſtern uſurpers have, when on the throne, diſplayed great talents. If Auguſtus, Cromwell, and many others of a ſimilar genius, may be claſſed among legiſlators, it is becauſe, they had to do with ſubjects of a more exalted turn of mind, and too brave and generous patiently to bear the rein; the apprehenſion of loſing the object of their deſires, ſtill kept alive in them the paſſion of ambition in all its former vivacity. Raiſed to thrones on which ſleep might have been fatal, they found it abſolutely neceſſary to conciliate their refractory ſubjects, to enact laws uſeful in that juncture (b), to

impoſe

(a) Caligula ordered Veſpaſian's robe to be dragged through the dirt for his neglecting to cauſe the ſtreets to be cleaned.

(b) This gained Cromwell the following juſt epitaph:

Ci git le deſtructeur d'un pouvoir légitime,
Juſqu'à ſon dernier jour favoriſé des cieux,

Dont

impoſe on their people, at leaſt delude them with the phantom of a tranſitory happineſs, to make them amends for the real misfortunes attending a uſurpation.

Thus it is to the danger the latter were continually expoſed to on the throne, that they owed that ſuperiority of talents which raiſed them above moſt of the eaſtern uſurpers; they were in ſome reſpects like the man of genius, who, being the butt of criticiſm and perpetually moleſted in the enjoyment of a very precarious reputation, feels that it is not he alone who is heated with the paſſion of vanity; and that if his renders him deſirous of eſteem, that of another will conſtantly withold it, unleſs he takes care, by uſeful and entertaining works and continual efforts of wit, to comfort them under the mortification of commending him. It is on the throne, that this fear keeps the mind in a ſtate of every kind of fecundity; this fear removed, the ſpring of the mind is broken.

Who doubts, but that a natural philoſopher often examines a phyſical problem, though ſometimes of little importance to ſociety, with infinitely more attention than a ſultan beſtows on the deliberation of a law, big with the happineſs or calamity of thouſands. If the latter beſtows leſs time in weighing and digeſting his ordinances and edicts than a wit does in compoſing a ſonnet or epigram, it is becauſe thinking, which is always fatiguing, is, as it were contrary to our nature (e); and that a ſultan being above puniſhment and ſatire, was deſtitute of motives for overcoming ſloth, the enjoyment of which is ſo agreeable to all mankind.

Thus we ſee the activity of the mind depends on the activity of the paſſions. It is therefore during the age of paſſion, that is from twenty-five to thirty-five and forty, that man is capable of the greateſt efforts, both of virtue and genius. At this age, men born for great things, have acquired a proper compaſs of learning, and their paſſions have yet ſcarce loſt any thing of their force: but beyond this term, our paſſions decline, and this is the period of mental acquiſition, no new ideas are then acquired; and whatever ſuperiority there may afterwards appear in their works, it is no more than the application and diſplay of the ideas acquired in the time of the efferveſcence of the paſſions, but which hitherto had not been reduced to practice.

Farther, it is not only to age that the decay of the paſſions is to be attributed: we abate of our fondneſs for an object, when the pleaſure promiſed to ourſelves from its poſſeſſion, does not equal the trouble of the acquiſition. He who is fond of glory ſacrifices his inclination to it, no farther than he thinks the ſacrifice will be repaid by the prize. On this account it was that ſo many heroes only could eſcape the ſnare of voluptuouſneſs in the tumult of camps and the acclamations of victory: on this account it was, that on a day

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Dont les vertus méritoient mieux
Que le ſceptre acquis par un crime.
Par quel deſtin faut-il, par quelle étrange loi,
Qu'à tous ceux qui ſont nés pour porter la cou-
[ronne,
Ce ſoit l'uſurpateur qui donne
L'exemple des vertus que doit avoir un roi!

The ſubſtance of which is: Here lies the diſtroyer of regal power, whom heaven conſtantly favoured, and whoſe virtues deſerved ſomething better than a ſceptre acquired by guilt. Strange! that from uſurpers the ſons of majeſty are taught the qualities becoming kings.

(e) Some philoſophers have advanced this paradox that ſlaves, under the hardeſt bodily labour, enjoyed perhaps in the tranquility of their minds a compenſation for all their ſufferings; and that by this tranquility of mind, the condition of the ſlave was often in happineſs equal to his maſter.

of

of battle alone, the great Conde could maſter his choler, being then perfectly calm and ſedate; it is on this account, if things called ſmall may be compared with great, that Dupre, noted for a careleſs gait, never laid aſide that awkward cuſtom but on the ſtage, where he thought the admiration of the ſpectators ſufficiently compenſated for the trouble he took to pleaſe them. Habits and ſloth are to be overcome only by a love of glory; and ſometimes it is nothing but the greateſt which will ſatisfy men, ſo that if they cannot make themſelves maſters of almoſt the whole empire of eſteem, moſt of them give themſelves up to a ſcandalous ſloth. Extreme pride and extreme ambition often produce in them the effect of indifference and moderation. In reality, it is a minute ſoul which deſires a minute glory. If they who are ſo curious in dreſſing, figuring, and ſpeaking in aſſemblies, are generally incapable of great things; it is not only, becauſe by acquiring an infinity of minute talents and accompliſhments they loſe that time which they might employ in the diſcovery of exalted ideas, and the culture of eminent talents, but becauſe the very purſuit of ſuch a trivial glory implies a debility and narrowneſs in their deſires. Accordingly, great men are ſeen for the moſt part utterly negligent of the minute cares and obſervances neceſſary to acquire a regard; theſe are ways they diſdain. "In that young man (ſaid Sylla ſpeaking of Cæſar), who "walks ſo immodeſtly along the ſtreets, I ſee ſeveral Mariuſes."

The reader, I hope, is now ſufficiently convinced, that the total abſence of paſſion, if poſſible, would reduce us to the moſt abſolute ſtupidity; and that the leſs we are animated by our paſſions, the nearer we approach that ſtate (d). Paſſions indeed are the celeſtial fire which vivifies the moral world; it is to the paſſions that the arts and ſciences owe their diſcoveries, and the ſoul its elevation. If they are alſo the ſources of the vices and of moſt of the misfortunes of men, theſe misfortunes do not warrant moraliſts in condemning the paſſions, and exploding them under the appellations of madneſs and folly. Sublime virtue and diſcerning wiſdom are two products of this folly, which ſhould render it reſpectable in their eyes.

The general concluſion of what I have ſaid on the paſſions is, that it is only their force that can counterballance in us the force of indolence and inertia, pluck us from that indulgence and ſtupidity to which we are inceſſantly gravitating; and laſtly endue us with that continuity of attention to which a ſuperiority of talents is annexed.

But it will be ſaid, has not nature by thus kindling in ſome men ſtronger diſpoſition to mental paſſions than in others, given men unequal improvements? To this queſtion I anſwer, That, if to excel in one kind does not, as I have above ſhewn, require the utmoſt ſtretch of application, neither is it neceſſary for diſtinction in the ſame kind to be animated with the moſt fervent paſſion, but only with a degree ſufficient for ſtimulating us to alertneſs and attention; beſides, it may be proper to obſerve, that, relatively to paſſions, there is not that difference between men as is imagined. To know whether nature in this reſpect has ſo unequally diſtributed its gifts, we muſt examine, whether all men are ſuſceptible of paſſions; and in order to this we muſt go back to their origin.

(d) It is often from the want of paſſions that ariſes the obſtinacy of perſons of mean parts; their ſlender knowledge ſuppoſes that they never had any deſire of inſtruction, or, at leaſt, that this deſire has been always very faint; very much below their fondneſs for ſloth: now he who is not deſirous of inſtruction, has never ſufficient motives for altering his mind. To ſave himſelf the fatigue of imagination, he muſt always turn a deaf ear to the remonſtrances of reaſon; and obſtinacy in this caſe is the neceſſary effect of ſloth.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Origin of the Paſſions.

IN order to arrive at this knowledge, we muſt diſtinguiſh the Paſſions into two kinds: thoſe immediately given us by nature; and thoſe we owe to the eſtabliſhment of ſociety. And to know which of theſe paſſions has produced the other, let us tranſport ourſelves in idea to the firſt ages of the world, and we ſhall there ſee that nature, by hunger, thirſt, heat, and cold, informed man of his wants, and added a variety of pleaſing and painful ſenſations; the former to the gratifications of theſe wants, the latter to the incapacity of gratifying them: there we ſhall behold man, capable of receiving the impreſſions of pleaſure and pain, and born as it were with a love for the one, and hatred for the other. Such was man, when he came from the hand of nature.

In this ſtate he had neither envy, pride, avarice, nor ambition; ſenſible only of the pleaſure and pain derived from nature, he was ignorant of all thoſe artificial pains and pleaſures we procure from the above paſſions. Such paſſions are then not immediately given by nature; but their exiſtence, which ſuppoſes that of ſociety, alſo ſuppoſes that we have in us the latent ſeeds of thoſe paſſions. If therefore we receive at our birth only wants, in thoſe wants and in our firſt deſires we muſt ſeek, the origin of theſe artificial paſſions, which can be nothing more than the unfolding of the faculty of ſenſation.

Perhaps both in the moral and natural world, God originally implanted only one principle in all he created, and that what is, and what ſhall be, is only the neceſſary unfolding of this principle.

He ſaid to matter, I endow thee with power. Immediately the elements ſubject to the laws of motion, but wandering and confounded in the deſarts of ſpace, formed a thouſand monſtrous aſſemblages, and produced a thouſand different chaoſes, till they at laſt placed themſelves in that equilibrium and natural order, in which the univerſe is now ſuppoſed to be arranged.

He ſeems alſo to have ſaid to man, I endow thee with ſenſibility, the blind inſtrument of my will, that being incapable of penetrating into the depth of my views, thou may'ſt accompliſh all my deſigns. I place thee under the guardianſhip of pleaſure and pain: both ſhall watch over thy thoughts, and thy actions; they ſhall beget thy paſſions, excite thy friendſhip, thy tenderneſs, thine averſion, thy rage; they ſhall kindle thy deſires, thy fears, thy hopes; they ſhall take of the veil off truth; they ſhall plunge thee in error and after having made thee conceive a thouſand abſurd and different ſyſtems of morality and government, ſhall one day diſcover to thee the ſimple principles, on the unfolding of which depends the order and happineſs of the moral world.

Let us ſuppoſe that heaven ſuddenly animates ſeveral men, their firſt employment will be to ſatisfy their wants, and ſoon after they will endeavour, by their cries, to expreſs the impreſſions they receive from pleaſure and pain. Thoſe

cries will conſtitute their firſt language, which, if we may judge from the poverty of the languages of the ſavages, muſt be very confined, and reducible to theſe firſt ſounds. When mankind, by becoming more numerous, ſhall begin to ſpread over the ſurface of earth; and like the waves of the ocean, which cover its diſtant banks, and inſtantly retire into its capacious bed, many generations ſhall have appeared on the earth, and be ſwallowed up in the gulph wherein all things are forgotten; when families ſhall live nearer to each other; when the deſire becomes common of poſſeſſing the ſame things, as the fruit of a certain tree, or the favours of a particular woman, it will excite quarrels and combats; and theſe beget anger and revenge. When, fated with blood, and weary of living in perpetual fear, mankind ſhall conſent to loſe a ſmall part of that liberty they found ſo prejudicial in a ſtate of nature; they will enter into conventions with each other, and theſe conventions will be their firſt laws; when they have formed laws, they will entruſt ſome perſons with the care of ſeeing them put in execution, and thoſe will be the firſt magiſtrates. Theſe rude magiſtrates of a ſavage people will inhabit the foreſts. After having in part deſtroyed the animals, the people will no longer be able to live by hunting, and the ſcarcity of proviſions will teach them the art of breeding and tending their flocks, which will ſupply their wants; and the nations that ſubſiſted by hunting, will become nations of ſhepherds. After a certain number of ages, when theſe laſt will be extremely multiplied, ſo that the earth will not in the ſame ſpace yield nouriſhment for a greater number of inhabitants, without being cultivated by human labour, the nations of ſhepherds will diſappear, and give place to nations of huſbandmen. The calls of hunger in diſcovering the art of agriculture, ſhall ſoon learn them that of meaſuring and dividing the lands. This being done, every man's property muſt be ſecured to him, and thence will ariſe a number of ſciences and laws. Lands from their different nature and cultivation, bearing different fruits, men will purchaſe what they want, by making exchanges with each other, and at length perceive the advantage of a general exchange that will repreſent all commodities; and for this purpoſe, they will make uſe of ſhells or metals. When ſocieties are arrived at this point of perfection, all equality between men will be deſtroyed: they will be diſtinguiſhed into ſuperiors and inferiors: then the words GOOD and EVIL, formed to expreſs the natural ſenſations of pleaſure and pain we receive from external objects, will generally extend to every thing that can procure, increaſe, or diminiſh either of theſe ſenſations; ſuch are riches and indigence: and then riches and honours, by the advantages annexed to them, will become the general object of the deſires of mankind. Hence will ariſe, according to the different forms of government, criminal or virtuous paſſions, ſuch as envy, avarice, pride, and ambition, patriotiſm, a love of glory, magnanimity, and even love, which being given by nature only as a want, will be confounded with vanity, and become an artificial paſſion, that will, like the others, ariſe from the unfolding of the natural ſenſibility.

However certain this concluſion may be, there are few men who can clearly perceive the ideas from which it reſults. Beſides, by owning that our paſſions originally derive their ſource from natural ſenſibility, we may believe, that in the ſtate in which polite nations are actually placed, theſe paſſions exiſted independently of the cauſes that has produced them. I propoſe then to follow the

metamorphoſis of the natural pleaſures and pains, into the artificial pleaſures pains and, to ſhew, that in the paſſions, ſuch as avarice, ambition, pride, and friendſhip, which ſeem leaſt to belong to the pleaſures of ſenſe, we always either ſeek natural pleaſure, or ſhun natural pain.

CHAP. X.

Of Avarice.

GOLD and ſilver may be conſidered as objects agreeable to the eye: but if we deſired nothing more in their poſſeſſion, than the pleaſures produced by the luſtre and beauty of theſe metals, the avaricious man would reſt ſatisfied with being allowed to contemplate freely, heaps of gold and ſilver in the publick treaſury. But as this view would be far from gratifying his paſſion, it neceſſarily follows, that the avaricious, of whatever claſs, either deſires riches as the means of procuring pleaſure, or as an exemption from the miſeries with which poverty is attended.

This principle being eſtabliſhed, I aſſert that man being, by nature, ſenſible of no other pleaſures than thoſe of the ſenſes, theſe pleaſures are conſequently the only object of his deſires. A fondneſs for luxury, magnificent equipages, expenſive entertainments, and ſuperb furniture, is then an artificial paſſion neceſſarily produced by the natural wants either of love, or the pleaſures of the table. Indeed, what real pleaſure can this luxury and magnificence procure the avaricious voluptuary, if he does not conſider them as the means of pleaſing women, and obtaining their favours, if they are the objects of his fondneſs; or of impoſing on men, and forcing them, by the uncertain hope of a reward, to remove from him every pain, and to aſſemble around him every pleaſure?

With theſe avaricious voluptuaries, who certainly do not properly deſerve to be called covetous, avarice is the immediate effect of the fear of pain and the love of pleaſure. But it may be asked, how can this love of pleaſure, or this fear of pain be excited in the really avaricious, thoſe wretched miſers, who never part with their money to purchaſe pleaſure? If they paſs their lives in the want of common neceſſaries, and exaggerate to themſelves and others the pleaſures annexed to the poſſeſſion of gold, it is merely to divert their attention from a misfortune, which no body can, or ought to pity.

However ſurprizing the contradiction may be, that is found between their conduct, and the motives from which they act, I ſhall endeavour to diſcover the cauſe, which, leaving them the inceſſant deſire of pleaſure, muſt always deprive them of its enjoyment.

In order to which, I ſhall obſerve firſt, that this kind of avarice derives its ſource from an exceſſive and ridiculous fear of the poſſibility of indigence, and of the many evils with which it is accompanied. The avaricious are like thoſe afflicted with an hypocondriac melancholy, who live in perpetual agonies, ſee themſelves ſurrounded with dangers, and are afraid of being cruſhed by every one that approaches them.

This ſpecies of the avaricious we commonly find among thoſe who were born in a ſtate of indigence, and have themſelves experienced the long train of evils with which it is attended. Their folly is therefore, in this reſpect, more pardonable than in men born in a ſtate of affluence, among whom there are ſeldom found any of the avaricious, except the proud or voluptuous.

To explain how among the former, the fear of wanting neceſſaries forces them to live in perpetual want, let us ſuppoſe any one of them when ſinking under the weight of poverty, forms a project for delivering himſelf from the painful burthen. Hope immediately ſteps in to his aſſiſtance, and gives freſh vigour to his ſoul, which had been bowed down by indigence; revives his activity, and makes him ſearch for protectors: She confines him to the anti-chambers of miniſters, makes him cringe at the feet of the great, and devote himſelf to a very miſerable life, till he has obtained a poſt that will raiſe him above want. But when he is arrived at this deſirable ſtate, will pleaſure be the only object of his purſuit? A man of this character, who is timid and diſtruſtful, will have a lively remembrance of the evils he has experienced, and the ſame motives that prompted the deſire of delivering himſelf from them, will determine him to refuſe the indulgence of every gratification, till he has acquired the habit of depriving himſelf of them. This man being once raiſed above want, if he is thirty-five or forty years of age, if the love of pleaſure has its edge every moment blunted, and is leſs ſenſibly felt, what will he then do? He will become more difficult in his pleaſures; if he is fond of women, he will have the moſt beautiful; and thoſe favours are purchaſed at the deareſt rate: he will therefore accumulate new riches, to gratify his new appetites. Now if in the time required for obtaining theſe acquiſitions, diſtruſt and timidity, which encreaſe with age, and may be conſidered as the effects of the ſenſibility of our weakneſs, ſhew him that, in point of riches, he can never have enough; and if his inſatiable thirſt after them is found to be equally balanced by his love of pleaſure, he will then be drawn by two different attractions. In order to obey both, this man, without renouncing pleaſure, will prove to himſelf, that he ought, at leaſt, to defer its enjoyment, till he has accumulated greater riches, when he may, without fear of futurity, employ himſelf entirely in the indulgence of preſent gratifications. If in the new interval neceſſary to amaſs new wealth, age ſhould ſuddenly render him inſenſible of pleaſure, will he then change his manner of life? Will he renounce habits, which the incapacity of acquiring new ones have rendered dear to him? No, he certainly will not: ſatisfied in contemplating his riches, and with the poſſibility of the pleaſures they are capable of procuring, he will endeavour to eſcape the pain of laſſitude, by giving up himſelf entirely to his ordinary purſuits: he will become ſo much the more avaricious in his old age, as the habit of accumulating wealth is no longer counterbalanced by the deſire of enjoying it, which will be ſtrengthened by the mechanical fear of want, wherewith old age is always accompanied.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Of Ambition.

THE credit annexed to important poſts, as well as to riches, preſerves us from pain, procures us pleaſures, and conſequently is to be conſidered as the means of avoiding the one, and procuring the other. We may therefore apply to Ambition what I have ſaid of Avarice.

Among the ſavage nations, whoſe chiefs or kings have no other privilege, than that of being fed and cloathed with what is caught by their warriors in hunting, the deſire of being freed from theſe wants conſtitutes ambition.

Rome in its infancy appointed no other reward for great actions, than as much land as one Roman could clear and till in a day; and this alone was ſufficient to form heroes.

What I ſay of Rome, I ſay of all poor nations, among whom the ambitious deſire only to be delivered from labour and fatigue. On the contrary, among opulent nations, where all who have any pretenſions to great places, have riches ſufficient to procure, not only the conveniencies, but the accommodations of life, ambition almoſt always flows from a love of pleaſure.

But, it is ſaid, that purple robes, coronets, and, in general, every mark of honour, can afford no natural ſatisfaction of pleaſure: ambition then cannot be founded on a love of pleaſure, but on the deſire of eſteem and reſpect, and is not therefore the effect of natural ſenſations.

If the deſire of grandeur, I reply, was only kindled by the deſire of glory and eſteem, it would never excite ambition any where but in republics, ſuch as Rome and Sparta, where dignities were commonly the inſignia of the great virtues and the diſtinguiſhed talents of which they were the reward. Among them ambition might flatter pride, ſince it ſecured to a man the eſteem of his fellow-citizens; and he having always great enterprizes to execute, might conſider great poſts as the means of rendering his glory conſpicuous, and proving his ſuperiority over others. Now the ambitious with equal ardour aſpire to grandeur in ages, where it is debaſed by the choice of the men who are raiſed to it, and conſequently at the time when its poſſeſſion is leſs flattering. Ambition is not then founded on the deſire of eſteem. In vain it is pretended that, in this reſpect, the ambitious may deceive himſelf: the marks of reſpect laviſhed upon him, inform him every moment that this honour is paid to his place, and not to him. He is ſenſible that the reſpect he enjoys is not perſonal; that it will vaniſh by the death or diſgrace of the poſſeſſor; that the advanced age of the prince may be ſufficient to deſtroy it; that then the perſons raiſed to the firſt employments, ſurround the ſovereign like the golden clouds that attend the ſetting ſun, whoſe ſplendor is obſcured and diſappear, in proportion as that luminary ſinks below the horizon. He has a thouſand times heard, and has himſelf as often ſaid, that honours are not purchaſed by merit; that promotion to great poſts,

poſts, is no proof of merit in the eyes of the public; and that on the contrary, it is generally conſidered, as the price of intrigue, and the meanneſs of importunity. If he doubts of it, let him conſult hiſtory, and eſpecially that of Byzantium, where he will ſee that a man may, at the ſame time, be inveſted with all the honours of an empire, and loaded with the contempt of nations. But if it be ſuppoſed, that the ambitious have a confuſed idea of the eſteem they are deſirous of obtaining, and that this is the only motive for their ſtriving for important poſts; it is eaſy to ſhew that this is not the true motive by which they are determined; and that in this particular they deceive themſelves; ſince no one, as I ſhall prove, when I conſider pride, can deſire eſteem for its own ſake; but for the advantages it procures. The deſire of greatneſs is not then produced by the deſire of eſteem.

To what then muſt we attribute the ardour with which perſons ſeek for dignities? Why is the ambitious man, like the young men of fortune, who love to ſhew themſelves in public in brilliant equipages, fond of appearing abroad, decorated with marks of honour? It is becauſe he conſiders theſe honours as a proclamation that informs the people of his independence, and of the power with which he is poſſeſſed of rendering, at his pleaſure, ſeveral of them happy or miſerable; and that it is for the intereſt of them all to merit his favour, which is always proportioned to the pleaſures they procure for him.

But, it will be asked, is not the ambitious fond of the reſpect and homage of mankind? It is indeed, their reſpect he deſires; but why does he deſire it? In the homage paid to the great, it is not the reſpectful geſture that pleaſes: if that geſture was of itſelf agreeable, there is no rich man, who would not procure himſelf ſuch happineſs without going out of his houſe, and ſtriving after greatneſs. To pleaſe himſelf, he would hire twelve porters, cloath them in magnificent habits, adorn them with all the ribbons in Europe, and make them wait every morning in his anti-chamber, to come daily to pay his vanity a tribute of adulation and reſpect.

The indifference of the rich for this kind of pleaſure, is a proof that they are not fond of reſpect for its own ſake, but as it is an acknowledgment of the inferiority of other men, as a pledge of their favourable diſpoſitions, and of their eagerneſs to avoid giving them pain, and to contribute to their pleaſures.

The deſire of greatneſs is then only founded on the love of pleaſure and the fear of pain. If this deſire did not derive its ſource from thence, what could be more eaſy than to undeceive the ambitious? O thou! might a perſon ſay, who art ſcorched with envy, on contemplating the pomp and ſplendor belonging to high poſts, dare to exalt myſelf to a more noble pride, and their luſtre ſhall ceaſe to impoſe upon thee. Imagine for a moment that thou art as ſuperior to other men, as the inſects are inferior to them; then theſe courtiers will ſeem only as bees that buz about their queen; and the ſceptre itſelf will appear no more than a glittering bauble.

Why do men never liſten to ſuch diſcourſes? Why will they always pay reſpect to thoſe who have little in their power, and conſtantly prefer great places to great abilities? It is becauſe greatneſs is a benefit, which, like riches, is capable of purchaſing an infinite number of pleaſures. Thus they are ſought for with ſo much the more ardour, as they are capable of giving us a more extenſive

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power over mankind, and conſequently of procuring us a greater number of advantages. In proof of this truth, ſuppoſe the thrones of Iſpahan and London were offered to our choice; there is hardly a man to be found who would not prefer the iron ſcepter of Perſia to that of England. Yet who can doubt, that in the opinion of a good man, the latter would appear moſt deſirable; and that were he to make his choice, he would chuſe that where the king being limited in his power, finds himſelf under a happy incapacity of injuring his ſubjects? If there are ſcarcely any of the ambitious, who would not rather chuſe to command the Perſians, a nation of ſlaves, than the Engliſh, a free people, it is becauſe an abſolute authority over men renders them more attentive to pleaſe us; becauſe they are informed by a ſecret inſtinct, that fear always pays more homage than love; becauſe tyrants, at leaſt while living, have been generally more honoured than good kings; becauſe gratitude has always raiſed leſs ſumptuous temples to the beneficent gods, who bear the horn of plenty (a), than fear has conſecrated to the cruel and coloſſal dignities, who, borne on ſtorms and tempeſts, and in lightning, are painted with a thunderbolt in their hands; becauſe, in ſhort, being inſtructed by this knowledge, they are ſenſible that more is to be expected from the obedience of a ſlave, than from the gratitude of a man who taſtes the ſweets of liberty.

The concluſion to be drawn from this chapter, is that the deſire of greatneſs is always produced by the fear of pain, or the love of ſenſual pleaſure, to which all the other pleaſures muſt neceſſarily be reduced. Thoſe derived from power and reſpect do not properly deſerve the name, they having obtained it only becauſe hope, and the means of procuring pleaſures, are pleaſing ſenſations; but theſe ſenſations only derive their exiſtence from natural pleaſure (b).

I am very ſenſible that in the ſchemes, the enterprizes, the crimes, the virtues, and the dazzling pomp of ambition, it is difficult to perceive the operations of natural ſenſibility. How in haughty ambition, who, with her arm ſmoaking with ſlaughter, ſits in the midſt of a field of battle, on a heap of carcaſes, and in token of victory claps her wings dropping with blood; how, I ſay, in this figure

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(a) In the city of Bartam the inhabitants offered their firſt fruits to the evil ſpirit, and nothing to the great Deity, who, they ſay, is good, and ſtands in no need of theſe offerings. Vincent le Blanc.

The inhabitants of Madagaſcar believe there is a good and an evil ſpirit. Before they eat they make an offering to God, and another to the demon. They begin with the latter, and throwing a piece on the right ſide, ſay, "That is for thee, my "lord devil." They afterwards throw a piece on the left ſide, ſaying, "That is for "thee, my Lord God." They make no prayers to him. Collect. of edifying letters.

(b) To prove that ambition is not produced by the natural pleaſures, ſome may perhaps ſay, that this paſſion ariſes from a vague deſire of happineſs. But I ſhall aſk, what is the vague deſire of happineſs? It is a deſire that has no determinate object. I would know, if the man, who, without loving any particular woman, loves the ſex in general, is not animated by a deſire of natural pleaſure? Whenever we give ourſelves the trouble of decompounding the vague ſenſation of love or happineſs, we always find the natural pleaſures at the bottom of the crucible. It is the ſame with the ambitious as with the avaricious, who would not be covetous of money, if it could not be given in exchange for pleaſure, or be made the means of eſcaping pain. Nobody deſires money in a city like Sparta, where money had no currency.

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of ambition, ſhall we diſcover the daughter of pleaſure? How ſhall we imagine, that by the dangers, the labours, and the fatigues of war, men are only in the purſuit of pleaſure? Yet it is ſhe alone, I maintain, who, under the name of libertiniſm, recruits the armies of almoſt all nations. People love pleaſure, and conſequently the means of procuring it: they deſire riches and honours, and inſpired alſo by indolence, would make their fortune in a day. Now war, which promiſes the ſoldiers the plunder of cities, and the officers honours, at the ſame time flatters their indolence and impatience. Men therefore more freely endure the fatigues of war (c), than the labours of agriculture, which affords them only a diſtant proſpect of wealth. Thus the antient Germans, the Celtes, the Tartars, the inhabitants on the coaſt of Africa, and the Arabs, were always more fond of robbery and piracy, than of the cultivation of the earth.

It is with war as with high play, which is preferred to playing for ſmall ſums, even at the riſque of ruin; becauſe playing deep flatters us with the hope of immediately obtaining great riches.

To take every thing that looks like a paradox from the principles I have juſt eſtabliſhed, I ſhall, in the title of the next chapter, expoſe the only objection I have not yet anſwered.

CHAP. XII.

If Man in the purſuit of Greatneſs ſeeks only the means of avoiding Pain and enjoying natural Pleaſure, why does Pleaſure ſo often eſcape from the ambitious?

WE may divide ambitious men into two kinds. Unhappily for ſociety, there are ſome men who are enemies to the felicity of others, and deſire high poſts, not to enjoy the advantages they procure, but to delight in the miſeries of the unfortunate, to torment mankind, and ſport with their diſtreſſes. This ſpecies of ambitious men are of a character not unlike that of the falſe devotees, who are generally eſteemed wicked; not becauſe the law they profeſs is not a law of love and charity, but becauſe the men who are commonly led to embrace an auſtere devotion (a) are diſſatisfied with this lower world, and can

(c) "Repoſe, ſays Tacitus, is to the "Germans, a ſtate of violence; they "inceſſantly ſigh after wars, in which they "ſoon diſtinguiſh themſelves; they are "more fond of fighting than of labour."

(a) Experience proves that, in general, the perſons of a character moſt inclined to deny themſelves certain pleaſures, and to embrace the auſtere maxims and practices of a particular kind of devotion, are commonly of a very unhappy diſpoſition. This is the only way of explaining, how ſo many ſectaries have been able to unite the holy and mild principles of religion, to ſo much wickedneſs and want of toleration: a want of toleration proved by ſuch a number of maſſacres. If youth, when no obſtacle is oppoſed to the paſſions, is commonly more humane and generous than old age, it is becauſe the mind is not yet hardened by misfortunes

can hope for happineſs only in another, and being gloomy, timid, and diſſatisfied, they endeavour by the view of the misfortunes of others, to divert their attention from their own. The ambitious of this caſt are but few in number; they have no greatneſs and nobleneſs of ſoul; they are ranked among tyrants, and by the nature of their ambition are deprived of all pleaſures.

The other claſs of the ambitious comprehends almoſt the whole number, and amongſt theſe I include all, who, in the poſſeſſion of great places, ſeek only for the advantages annexed to them. Of theſe there are ſome, who from their birth or ſituation are at firſt raiſed to important poſts: whence they may ſometimes unite pleaſure and ambition; they are born, as it were, in the middle (b) of the courſe they have to run. This is not the caſe of the man in moderate circumſtances, who, like Cromwell, would riſe to the higheſt poſts. In entering the path of ambition, in which the firſt ſteps are commonly the moſt difficult, he has a thouſand intrigues to invent, and a thouſand friends to manage; he has at one and the ſame time the care of forming grand projects, and the particulars in relation to their execution. Now to diſcover how ſuch men, who are warmly engaged in the purſuit of every pleaſure, and animated alone by this motive, are ſo often deprived of it, let us ſuppoſe, that, greedy of theſe pleaſures, and ſtruck with the eagerneſs with which people endeavour to anticipate the deſires of the great, ſuch a man endeavours to raiſe himſelf to the firſt poſts. If he is born in thoſe countries where the people have the diſpoſal of favours, where the public eſteem can only be obtained by ſervices done to his country, and where merit is conſequently neceſſary; or if he be born under an abſolute deſpotic government, as that of the Mogul, where honours are purchaſed by intrigue; or where-ever elſe he received his birth, he can afford little time for pleaſure. To prove it, I will take the pleaſure of love for an inſtance, not only as the moſt lively of all the paſſions, but alſo as the moſt univerſal ſpring of civilized ſocieties. For it is proper to obſerve by the way, that there is in every nation a natural want that may be conſidered as the univerſal ſoul of that nation. Among the ſavages in the north, who are often expoſed to the moſt dreadful famine, and are always employed either in hunting or fiſhing, all their ideas flow from hunger and not love: this want is in them the ſeed of all their thoughts. Thus all the combinations formed by their minds, turn on the ſtratagems uſed in hunting and fiſhing, and on the means of ſupplying the calls of hunger. On the contrary, the love of women is, among civilized nations,

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misfortunes and infirmities. The man of a generous diſpoſition is gay and obliging, and he alone ſays, "Let all the world partake "of my joys." But the man of a gloomy temper is wicked. Cæſar ſaid, ſpeaking of Caſſius, "I dread theſe men with pale "meagre countenances; it is not ſo with "the Antonies, who are wholly taken up "with pleaſure, their hands gather flowers, "and are never employed in ſharpening "poniards." This is a fine obſervation of Cæſar, and is more generally true than is imagined.

(b) Ambition in them, is, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, rather an appendage of their rank, than a ſtrong paſſion, ſtimulated by obſtacles and triumphing over all oppoſition.

the main ſpring by which they are moved (c). In theſe countries love invents and produces every thing: magnificence, and the arts of luxury, neceſſarily flow from the love of women, and a deſire to pleaſe them; and even our inclination to impoſe on one another, by the ſplendor of wealth and greatneſs, is only a new method of ſeducing them. Let us then ſuppoſe, that a man, born without a fortune, but fond of the pleaſures of love, has obſerved, that the women comply the more eaſily with the deſires of a lover, in proportion as the elevation of his rank, will reflect the greater honour on her; and that being thus filled with ambition by his paſſion for women, he aſpires to the poſt of general, or to that of prime miniſter; in order to obtain thoſe places, he muſt apply his whole care in acquiring abilities, or in forming intrigues. Now the kind of life moſt proper to enable him to become a man of deep art, or a perſon of merit, is entirely oppoſite to a life of gallantry; women being pleaſed with aſſiduities that are incompatible with the life of an ambitious man. It is then certain that in youth, and till he obtains thoſe great places, that will induce the women to exchange their favours for the honour and credit of his embraces, he muſt deprive himſelf of the enjoyment of his favourite gratification, and ſacrifice almoſt for ever, preſent pleaſures to the hope of enjoying future delights. I ſay almoſt for ever; becauſe the road of ambition is commonly very long in running. Not to mention thoſe, whoſe ambition is encreaſed as ſoon as ſatisfied, and whoſe deſires are no ſooner accompliſhed, than new ones ſucceed; who from being miniſters, would be kings; who from being kings would aſpire, like Alexander, to univerſal monarchy, and would aſcend a throne where the reſpect of the whole world would aſſure them, that the whole world was employed in contributing to their happineſs: without mentioning, I ſay, theſe extraordinary men, and ſuppoſing even moderation in ambition, it is evident that a man who becomes ambitious from the love of women, will not, in common, obtain the higheſt poſts, till he arrives at the age when his deſires will be extinguiſhed.

(c) Not that theſe are the only motives that may kindle the fire of ambition. In countries where the inhabitants are poor, as I have obſerved above, the power of ſupplying their wants is the object to which the ambitious aſpire. In deſpotic ſtates the fear of the puniſhment to which a perſon may ſuddenly be put, by the caprice of a tyrant, may alſo form ambitious men. But in civilized nations it is a vague deſire of happineſs; a deſire that is conſtantly derived as I have already ſhewn, from the pleaſures of ſenſe, that moſt commonly inſpires a love of greatneſs. Now from among theſe pleaſures, I was doubtleſs in the right to chuſe that of women, as the moſt lively and powerful. As a proof that we are animated by pleaſures of this kind, it appears that we are only capable of the acquiſition of the great abilities, and deſperate reſolutions, neceſſary to aſcend to high poſts, in the time of youth, that is, at an age when the natural wants are more warmly felt. But old men aſcend with pleaſure to great employments: they do ſo, they accept of them, and they deſire them; but this deſire does not deſerve the name of a paſſion, ſince they are no longer capable of thoſe hardy enterprizes, and extraordinary efforts of mind, that ſpring from the paſſions. The old man may proceed by habit, along the courſe in which he ſet out in his youth; but he can never begin a new one.

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But ſuppoſing that his deſires are ſtill luke-warm, ſcarce has he obtained his wiſhes, when he finds himſelf placed on a ſteep and ſlippery rock; he ſees himſelf on every ſide the butt of the envious, who ſtand about him with their bows bent, ready to pierce him with their arrows. He then diſcovers, with horror, the tremendous abyſs that opens for him; he perceives that by his fall, as a ſad appendage of greatneſs, he will be miſerable without being pitied; expoſed to inſults from thoſe whom he had affronted by his pride; he will be the object of the contempt of his rivals; a contempt more painful than any outrage they could offer him; that being the deriſion of his inferiors, they will then free themſelves from that tribute of reſpect, which, in the enjoyment, may ſome time appear troubleſome; but its loſs is inſupportable, when habit has rendered it a want. He ſees then, that deprived of the only pleaſure he had ever taſted, and reduced to a ſtate of debaſement, he will no longer enjoy the contemplation of his grandeur, like the avaricious man in contemplating his wealth, with the poſſibility of obtaining all the enjoyments they are capable of affording him.

This ambitious man is then by the fear of pain, and the laſſitude of indolence, kept in the courſe he entered from a love of pleaſure: the deſire of preſerving, ſucceeds the deſire of acquiring. Now the care neceſſary to maintain his dignities being nearly the ſame as thoſe by which he acquired them, it is evident that he muſt ſpend his youth and riper age in the purſuit and preſervation of thoſe places, that were only deſired as the means of obtaining the pleaſures that always fly from him. Thus being advanced to an age at which he is incapable of a new kind of life, he gives himſelf up entirely to his old employments, and muſt do ſo; becauſe a mind continually agitated by fear and lively hopes, and inceſſantly actuated by ſtrong paſſions, will always prefer the torments of ambition, to the inſipid calm of tranquil life. Like the veſſels which the waves ſtill carry towards the ſouth, when the north wind has ceaſed to blow, men follow in old age the ſame direction that was given them by their paſſions in their youth.

I have now ſhewn how the ambitious man, called to greatneſs by a paſſion for women, enters into a rugged path. If he, by chance, meets with ſome pleaſures, theſe are always mixed with bitterneſs; he taſtes them with delight only, becauſe they are very rare, and ſtrewed here and there, like the trees ſcattered far from each other in the deſerts of Lybia, whoſe ſcorched leaves can afford no agreeable ſhelter, except to the burnt African who repoſes under them.

The contradiction we perceive between the conduct of an ambitious man, and the motives from which he acts, is then only ſo in appearance; ambition therefore, is kindled by a love of pleaſure, and a fear of pain. But it may be ſaid, that though avarice and ambition are the effects of a natural ſenſibility, pride, at leaſt, cannot be derived from the ſame ſource.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Pride.

PRIDE is only a true or falſe opinion of our own excellence: an opinion which, depending on the advantageous compariſon we make between ourſelves and others, muſt conſequently ſuppoſe the exiſtence of men, and even the eſtabliſhment of ſociety.

The ſenſation of pride is not then innate, like thoſe of pleaſure and pain: pride is therefore an artificial paſſion, that ſuppoſes the knowledge of beauty and excellence. Now excellence and beauty are only what the greateſt number of mankind have always conſidered as ſuch. The idea of eſteem then preceded that of being worthy of eſteem: but theſe ideas were ſoon confounded together. Thus the man, who, animated by the noble and pompous deſire of pleaſing himſelf, and ſatisfied with his own eſteem, believes that he looks with indifference on the general opinion, is, in this particular, the dupe of his own pride, and miſtakes the deſire of being eſteemed, for the deſire of being worthy of eſteem.

In reality, pride can never be any thing more than a ſecret and diſguiſed deſire of the public eſteem. Why will the ſame man, who in the foreſts of America, derives his vanity from the ſtrength and agility of his body, be leſs proud of theſe advantages in France, where their want is compenſated by more eſſential qualifications? It is becauſe ſtrength and agility of body neither can nor ought to be ſo much eſteemed by a Frenchman as by a ſavage.

To prove that pride is only a diſguiſed love of eſteem, let us ſuppoſe a man ſolely poſſeſſed by the deſire of raiſing in his mind an aſſurance of his own excellence and ſuperiority. Upon this ſuppoſition, that ſuperiority, which is the moſt perſonal, and the moſt independant of chance, will doubtleſs appear the moſt flattering: and therefore, if he is to chuſe either literary or military glory, he would give the preference to the former. Would he contradict Cæſar himſelf? Would he not confeſs with that hero, that the laurel of victory is by the ſenſible part of the public, always divided between the general, the ſoldier, and chance; and that on the contrary, the laurels of the Muſes belong without participation to thoſe whom they inſpire? Would he not confeſs that chance might often place ignorance and cowardice on the triumphant car, and that it has never crowned the brow of a ſtupid author?

In conſulting only his pride, that is, the deſire of entertaining an high opinion of his own excellence, it is certain, that literary glory would appear the moſt deſirable. The preference we give a great general above a profound philoſopher, would not, in this reſpect, alter his opinion: he would perceive, that if the public has a higher eſteem for the general than for the philoſopher, it is becauſe the talents of the firſt have a more ſpeedy influence on the public happineſs,

neſs, and that the maxims of a wiſe man muſt appear of immediate uſe only to a ſmall number of thoſe who are deſirous of inſtruction.

Yet if there be nobody in France, who would not prefer the glory of arms to that of literature, I conclude from thence, that it is only to the deſire of being eſteemed, that they owe the deſire of being worthy of eſteem, and that pride is nothing more than the love of eſteem.

In order to prove that this paſſion of pride or eſteem is produced by the ſenſes, it is proper now to enquire if any one deſires eſteem for its own ſake, and if this fondneſs for eſteem is not the effect of the fear of pain and the love of pleaſure.

To what other cauſe, in fact, can be attributed the ſolicitude with which people endeavour to obtain the eſteem of the public? Is it owing to an inward diſtruſt of our merit, and conſequently to pride, that being deſirous of eſteeming ourſelves, and not being able to do it alone, we want the public ſuffrage to prop the high opinion we have of ourſelves, in order to enjoy the delicious thoughts of our own excellence?

But if we owe the love of eſteem only to this motive, then the moſt extenſive eſteem, that is, ſuch as ſhould be granted by the greateſt number of men, would, without doubt, appear the moſt flattering and deſirable, as the moſt proper to ſilence in our minds an importunate diſtruſt, and to make us reſt ſatisfied with our own merit. Now, ſuppoſing that the planets were inhabited by beings like ourſelves; and that one of the inhabitants of thoſe worlds came every moment to inform us of what paſſed there, and that a man had the choice either of having the eſteem of his own country, or that of all thoſe celeſtial worlds: upon this ſuppoſition, is it not evident, that he would deſire the moſt extenſive eſteem, that is, that of all the planetary inhabitants, and that they ſhould give him the preference to all his fellow citizens? There is however, nobody, who, in this caſe, would not determine in favour of the national eſteem. We then do not owe this love of eſteem to our deſire of being firmly aſſured of our own merit, but to the advantages this eſteem procure for us.

In order to be convinced of this, let any man put the following queſtion to himſelf, whence comes the ſolicitude, with which thoſe who declare themſelves the moſt anxiouſly fond of the public eſteem, ſeek for high poſts in thoſe periods of time, when croſſed by intrigues and cabals, they can be of no ſervice to their country; and when conſequently they will be expoſed to the deriſion of the public, who, always equitable in their judgments, deſpiſe the man who is ſo indifferent with reſpect to eſteem, as to accept of a poſt, the duties of which he cannot worthily diſcharge? Let him alſo ask himſelf, why a man is more delighted at having the eſteem of a prince, than that of a private perſon of no conſequence; and it will be found that in every caſe our fondneſs for eſteem, is always in proportion to the advantages that may accrue from it?

If we prefer the eſteem of the ignorant multitude to that of a few ſelect perſons, it is becauſe we ſee a greater number of men ſubject to that kind of empire which eſteem rules over minds; and becauſe, a greater number of admirers more frequently lay before us an agreeable image of the pleaſures they may procure for us.

For

For this reaſon, we are quite indifferent with reſpect to the admiration of a people with whom we have no connection; there are few Frenchmen who would be much affected by the eſteem felt for them by the inhabitants of Great Tibet. If there are men who would poſſeſs univerſal eſteem, and be anxious for poſſeſſing that of the Terra Auſtralis, this deſire is not the effect of a greater love of eſteem; but only flows from the habit they have acquired of uniting the idea of a greater happineſs, to the idea of a greater eſteem (a).

The laſt and the ſtrongeſt proof of the truth of what is here advanced, is, the diſguſt people have for eſteem (b), and the ſcarcity there is of great men, in the ages when no rewards are adjudged to merit. It appears as if a man capable of exerting great talents, or great virtues, enters into a tacit contract with his country, by which he promiſes to render himſelf illuſtrious by his abilities, and by actions that ſhall be of uſe to his fellow-citizens, provided they will have the gratitude to eaſe his pains, and aſſemble about him every pleaſure.

To the negligence and punctuality of the public in fulfilling theſe tacit engagements, is owing, in all ages and countries, the multitude or the ſcarcity of great men.

We do not then love eſteem for its own ſake, but only for the advantages it procures. In vain would people arm themſelves againſt this concluſion, with the example of Curtius: a fact that ſtands almoſt alone in hiſtory, can prove nothing againſt principles ſo abundantly ſupported by experience, eſpecially when that very fact may be attributed to other principles, and naturally explained by other cauſes.

In order to form a Curtius, it is ſufficient that a man, weary of life, finds himſelf under that unhappy diſorder of body, that renders ſo many of the Engliſh ſuicides: or that in a very ſuperſtitious age, like that in which Curtius lived, a man ſhould ariſe, who, having more ſuperſtition and credulity than the reſt, ſhould fancy, that by ſacrificing himſelf he ſhould obtain a place among the gods. Upon either of theſe ſuppoſitions, he might devote himſelf to death, either to put an end to his miſeries, or to enter into the poſſeſſion of celeſtial pleaſures.

The concluſion of this chapter is, that people deſire to be worthy of eſteem, only to enjoy eſteem; and that they deſire eſteem, only to enjoy the pleaſures annexed to it: a fondneſs for eſteem is then a diſguiſed love of pleaſure. Now, if there be only two ſorts of pleaſures, the one the pleaſures of ſenſe, and the other the means of acquiring them; for theſe means are ranked in the claſs of pleaſures, becauſe the hope of obtaining them is the beginning of pleaſure; but of a pleaſure that has no real exiſtence till this hope is realized. Natural ſenſuality is then the ſeed that produces pride, and all the other paſſions, among

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(a) Men are habituated by the principles of a good education, to confound the idea of happineſs with that of eſteem. But under the name of eſteem they really deſire only the advantages it procures.

(b) Little is done to merit eſteem in countries, where it produces no fruit: but whenever it procures great advantages, people run to it, like Leonidas, to defend with three hundred men the paſs of Thermopyle.

which

which I include friendſhip, which being, in appearance, more independent on the pleaſures of ſenſe, deſerves to be examined, in order to confirm, by this laſt example, all that has been here ſaid on the origin of the paſſions.

CHAP. XIV.

Of Friendſhip.

LOVE implies want, and there is no friendſhip without it; for this would be an effect without a cauſe. All men have not the ſame wants, and therefore the friendſhip that ſubſiſts between them, is founded on different motives: ſome want pleaſure or money, others credit; thoſe converſation, and theſe a confident, to whom they may diſburthen their hearts. There are conſequently friends of money (a), of intrigue, of the mind, and of misfortune.

(a) Perſons have hitherto taken intolerable pains to repeat after each other, that thoſe ought not to be reckoned in the liſt of friends, whoſe intereſted views makes them love us only for our money. This kind of friendſhip is certainly not the moſt flattering: but it is nevertheleſs a real friendſhip. Men, for inſtance, love in a comptroller general the power he has of obliging them; and in moſt of them the love of the perſon is incorporated with the love of the money. Why is the name of friendſhip refuſed to this ſenſation? Men do not love us for ourſelves, but always on ſome other account, and the above-mentioned is as good as any other. A man is in love with a woman: can it be ſaid that he does not love her, becauſe he only admires the beauties of her eyes, or complexion? But, it is ſaid, the rich man, when reduced to poverty, is no longer beloved. This is not denied; but when the ſmall-pox robs a woman of her beauty, all addreſſes to her commonly ceaſe; tho' this is no proof that ſhe was not beloved while ſhe was beautiful. Suppoſe a friend in whom we had the greateſt confidence, and for whoſe mind, diſpoſition, and character, we had the higheſt eſteem, was ſuddenly become blind, deaf, and dumb; we ſhould regret in him the loſs of a friend; we ſhould ſtill reſpect his memory; but in fact, we ſhould no longer love him; becauſe he would have no reſemblance of the man we had loved. If a comptroller general falls into diſgrace, we no longer love him, for this reaſon, becauſe he is the friend who is ſuddenly become blind, deaf, and dumb. It is nevertheleſs true, that the man anxious for money, has great tenderneſs for him who can procure it for him. Whoever has this want of money, is born the friend of the poſt of comptroller general, and of him who poſſeſſes it. His love is inſcribed in the inventory of the moveables and utenſils belonging to his office. It is then our vanity that makes us refuſe giving the name to ſo ſelfiſh and neceſſary a paſſion. Upon which, I ſhall obſerve, that the moſt ſolid and durable friendſhips are commonly thoſe of virtuous men, however villains themſelves are ſuſceptible of it. If, as we are forced to confeſs, friendſhip is only the ſenſation by which two men are united, we cannot deny, but that friendſhip ſubſiſts between the wicked, without contradicting the moſt authentic facts. Can we, for inſtance, doubt that two conſpirators may be united by the warmeſt friendſhip? That Jaffier did not love James Piero? That Octavius, who was certainly not a virtuous man, did not love Mecænas, who was at beſt but a weak man? The power of friendſhip is not in proportion to the honeſty of two friends, but to the force of the intereſt by which they are united.

Nothing

Nothing can be of more uſe than to conſider friendſhip under this point of view, and to form clear ideas of it.

In friendſhip, as in love, people form the moſt romantic ideas: they always ſearch for the hero, and every inſtant think they have found him: they hang upon the firſt that offers; they love him, while they know little of him, and are deſirous of knowing him better; but no ſooner is their curioſity ſatisfied, than they are diſguſted. They have not found the hero of romance. Thus we become ſuſceptible of ſome regard, but are incapable of friendſhip. It is therefore for the intereſt of friendſhip itſelf, that we ſhould have clear ideas of it.

I confeſs, that in conſidering it as a reciprocal want, it cannot but be acknowledged, that it is very difficult for the ſame wants, and conſequently, for the ſame friendſhip (b), to ſubſiſt between two men for a long courſe of time, and therefore nothing is more uncommon than friendſhip of long ſtanding (c).

Friendſhip is much more durable than love; and yet has however, its birth, its encreaſe, and decay; but thoſe who have not felt its power, never paſs from the warmeſt friendſhip to the ſevereſt hatred, nor are they ever expoſed to the pain of deteſting him they have loved. Does a friend diſappoint our expectations? We are not enraged againſt him; we give a ſigh to human nature, and with tears exclaim, my friend has no longer need of me!

It is difficult enough to form clear ideas of friendſhip. With reſpect to this paſſion, all about us contribute to deceive us. There are ſome, who, to render themſelves more worthy of eſteem in their own eyes, exaggerate to themſelves their affection for their friends; make romantic deſcriptions of friendſhip, and perſuade themſelves that they are real; till a proper occaſion, by undeceiving both them and their friends, convinces them that they did not love them ſo much as they thought they did.

Theſe frequently pretend, that they are deſirous of loving, and of being warmly beloved. But we are never ſo violently affected with the virtues of a man, as when we firſt ſee him; for as cuſtom renders us inſenſible to perſonal beauties, a good underſtanding, and even the qualities of the ſoul, we are never ſo ſtrongly agitated as by the pleaſure of ſurprize; a man of wit ſaid pleaſantly enough on this occaſion, that thoſe who would be beloved (d), with ſuch warmth,

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(b) The circumſtances in which two friends ought to be found, being once given, and their characters known; if they are ever to quarrel, there is no doubt, but that a man of penetration, by foreſeeing the time when theſe two men would ceaſe to be reciprocally of uſe to each other, might calculate the moment when their rupture would happen, as an aſtronomer calculates the time of an eclipſe.

(c) We ought not to confound with friendſhip the chains of habit, the reſpectful eſteem felt for an acknowledged friend, or that happy point of honour ſo uſeful to ſociety, that makes us keep an acquaintance with thoſe whom we call our friends. We perform the ſame ſervices for them, that we did, when they filled us with the warmeſt ſenſations; though in reality we do not want their company, and do not love them.

(d) Friendſhip is not, as ſome people pretend, a perpetual tender ſenſation, becauſe mankind are never conſtant in any thing.

warmth, ought in friendſhip, as well as in love, to have many new paſſions, but none of them laſting; becauſe, added he, the beginnings in both, have always the moſt lively and tender moments.

But for one who impoſes on himſelf, there are ten hypocrites in friendſhip, who pretend to have the ſenſations they do not feel, make many dupes, but are never dupes themſelves. They paint friendſhip in lively, but falſe colours: being only attentive to their own intereſt, they endeavour to make others model themſelves in their favour after the portait they draw of that paſſion (e).

Man being expoſed to ſo many errors, it is very difficult to obtain adequate ideas of friendſhip. But what evil, ſay they, is there in exaggerating a little the force of this ſenſation? The evil of habituating men to expect from their friends perfections not to be found in human nature?

An infinite number of ſenſible men, ſeduced by ſuch pictures, have long purſued a vain chimera; but being at length enlightened by experience, are become diſguſted with friendſhip, for whoſe connections they had been well adapted, had they not formed ideas of it that were too romantic.

Friendſhip ſuppoſes a want; and the more this want is felt, the more lively will be the friendſhip: the want is then the meaſure of the ſenſation. A man and woman eſcaping ſhipwreck, ſave themſelves on a deſart iſland; where, having no hope of ever ſeeing their native country, they are forced to bend their mutual aſſiſtance, to defend themſelves from the wild beaſts, to enjoy life, and to eſcape deſpair: no friendſhip can be more warm than that between this man and woman, who would have perhaps hated each other, had they remained at Paris. If one of them happens to periſh, the other has really loſt the half of himſelf: no grief can equal his: he muſt have dwelt alone in a deſart iſland, who can be ſenſible of all its violence?

As the force of friendſhip is always proportioned to our wants, there are forms of government, manners, circumſtances, and, in ſhort, ages, more favourable to friendſhip than others.

In the ages of chivalry, when they choſe a companion in arms, and two knights ſhared in the glory and danger, and when the cowardice of one might coſt the life and honour of the other, they became, from intereſt, more careful in the choice of their friends, and conſequently more cloſely united to them.

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thing. Between the moſt cordial friends there happen moments of coolneſs: friendſhip is then a continual ſucceſſion of warmth and coolneſs; the latter are very rare.

(e) It may, perhaps, require courage, and a capacity for friendſhip, to enable a perſon to give a clear idea of it: for we are at leaſt certain of raiſing againſt us the hypocrites in friendſhip: there are ſome of theſe, who, like bragging cowards, are always boaſting of their exploits. Let thoſe who pretend to be ſuſceptible of friendſhip, read the Toxaris of Lucian, and aſk themſelves, if they are capable of the actions which friendſhip made the Scythians and Greeks perform? If they examine themſelves with ſincerity, they will confeſs, that in this age we have not even the idea of this kind of friendſhip. Thus, among the Scythians and Greeks, friendſhip was placed in the rank of the virtues. A Scythian could not have above two friends; but he was to ſtop at nothing in ſerving them. They were in part animated by the love of eſteem, under the name of friendſhip; for friendſhip alone would never have been ſo courageous.

When the fashion of duels supplied the place of chivalry, the men who with their friends daily exposed themselves to the danger of death, became more dear to each other. Friendship then was held in great veneration, and reckoned among the virtues: it supposed in the knights and duellists great loyalty and valour; virtues that were honoured, and ought to be so, as these virtues were almost always in action (f).

It is proper sometimes to recollect that the same virtues are, at different times, more or less valued, according to their unequal use in different ages.

Who doubts that in revolutions and times of distress, and in a form of government that seems to favour factions, friendship is stronger, and more courageous, than when every thing is in a state of tranquility? History furnishes us with a thousand examples of heroism of this kind. Friendship then supposes a man possessed of courage, discretion, firmness, knowlege, and prudence: qualities that being absolutely necessary in troublesome times, and rarely to be found in the same man, ought to render him extremely dear to his friend.

Our manners do not require the same perfections (g) in our friends, because these perfections are of no use to us: we have no important secrets to trust, nor battles to fight, and consequently have no occasion either for prudence, knowlege, discretion, or courage, in a friend.

In the actual form of our government, the individuals are not united by any common interest. In order to make our fortunes, we have less need of friends, than of an infinite number of protectors. Luxury, and what is called the spirit of society, have secured a great number of men from the want of friendship. No motive, no interest, is now sufficient to make us overlook the seeming or real faults of our friends. There is therefore no friendship (h); we do not affix to the word friend, even the same ideas as formerly; we may in this age cry out with Aristotle (i), "O my friends! no longer is there a friend to be found."

Now, if there are ages, manners, and forms of government, wherein there is more or less need of a friend, and if the warmth of friendship is proportioned

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(f) BRAVE was then synonymous to HONEST; and, from the remains of antient custom, we still say a BRAVE MAN, when we mean one who is loyal and honest.

(g) In the present age, friendship requires scarcely any qualifications. An infinite number of men give themselves out for true friends, in order to appear of some consequence. Others become hackney solicitors in other people's affairs, in order to escape the pain of having nothing to do: others perform services, but make the persons they have obliged pay dear for them, by the loss of their liberty; and some few others, in short, believe themselves worthy of friendship, because they are the sure guardians of a secret, and have the virtues of a strong box.

(h) Thus, says the proverb, we should say we have many friends, and think we have but few.

(i) Every body repeats after Aristotle, that there is no such thing as a friend to be found, and yet each maintains that he is a good friend. Two such contradictory propositions can only arise from the great number of hypocrites in point of friendship, and there being many men who do not know themselves.

These last, as I have already said, will oppose some of the propositions in this chapter. I shall have their clamours against me; but, unhappily for them, I have experience on my side.

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to the greatneſs of this want, there are alſo ſituations in which the heart becomes more eaſily opened to the admiſſion of friendſhip, and theſe are commonly thoſe where we have more frequent need of the aſſiſtance of others.

The unfortunate are, in general, the moſt tender friends: united by their reciprocal diſtreſſes, they enjoy, while condoling the misfortune of a friend, the pleaſure of being affected with their own.

What I have ſaid on circumſtances, I alſo ſay of characters: there are ſome who cannot live without a friend. The firſt are thoſe of a weak and timid diſpoſition, who, in their whole conduct never conclude on any thing, without the advice and aſſiſtance of others: the ſecond are, the perſons of a gloomy, ſevere, and tyrannical temper, who are the warm friends of thoſe over whom they vent their ſpleen: theſe are like one of the wives of Socrates, who, at the news of the death of that great man, became more inconſolable than the ſecond, who, being of a mild and amiable diſpoſition, loſt in Socrates only an huſband, while the other loſt in him the martyr of her capricious temper, and the only man who could bear with it.

There are, in ſhort, men free from all ambition, or ſtrong paſſions, and whoſe ſole delight is in the converſation of men of ſenſe and learning. In the preſent ſyſtem of manners, the men of this caſt, if they are virtuous, are the moſt tender and faithful of their friends. Their ſouls, always open to friendſhip, know all its charms: and having, upon my ſuppoſition, no paſſion that can counterbalance this ſenſation, it becomes their only want: thus they are ſenſible of a very rational, and courageous friendſhip, without however having ſo much as that of the Greeks and Romans.

From a contrary reaſon, people are in general, the leſs ſuſceptible of friendſhip, in proportion as they are more independent on other men. Thus the rich and powerful are commonly but little ſenſible of friendſhip; and generally paſs for men without feeling. In fact, whether men are naturally cruel, whenever they can be ſo with impunity; whether the rich and powerful conſider the miſeries of others as a reproach for their own happineſs; or, in ſhort, whether they deſire to be delivered from the importunate requeſts of the unhappy, it is certain, that they almoſt conſtantly treat the miſerable with inhumanity (k). The ſight of the unfortunate has on moſt men the effect of Meduſa's head, at his aſpect, hearts are turned to ſtone.

There are beſides ſome perſons quite indifferent with reſpect to friendſhip; and others who enjoy a ſelf-ſufficiency (l). Accuſtomed to ſeek for, and to find happineſs

(k) The leaſt fault a man in diſtreſs commits, is a ſufficient pretence for the rich to refuſe him all aſſiſtance; they would have the unhappy entirely perfect.

(l) There are few men of this claſs; the power of finding a ſufficiency in ourſelves, which is made an attribute of the Deity, and we are forced to revere in him, is always placed in the rank of the vices, when it is found in man. Thus we blame under one appellation, what we admire under another. How many times have people, under the name of inſenſibility, reproached M. de Fontenelle, for the power of being ſelf-ſufficient; that is, of being one of the wiſeſt and happieſt of all mankind.

As the princes of Madagaſcar make war on their neighbours, whoſe flocks are more numerous

happineſs in themſelves, and being become too knowing to be made dupes, they cannot preſerve a happy ignorance of the wickedneſs of mankind; a precious ignorance, which in early youth locks ſo cloſely the bonds of friendſhip: thus they are but little ſenſible of the charms of this ſenſation; not that they are now incapable of feeling it. Theſe are often, as a very ſenſible lady ſaid, rather diſabuſed, than inſenſible.

It follows from what I have ſaid, that the power of friendſhip is always proportioned to men's want of each other (m); and that this want is varied according to the difference of ages, manners, forms of government, circumſtances, and characters. But if friendſhip, it is objected, be a want, it is at leaſt no natural want. What is a friend? Is it not a relation of choice? We deſire a friend, to live, in a manner, in him, to pour out our ſoul into his, and to enjoy a converſation, which confidence always renders delightful. This paſſion is then founded neither on the fear of pain, nor the love of ſenſual pleaſure. But, I reply, in what does the charm of the converſation of a friend conſiſt? It is in the charm of ſpeaking of ourſelves. Has fortune placed us in a comfortable ſituation? We converſe with a friend, on the means of encreaſing our wealth,

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numerous than theirs, they always repeat theſe words, "Thoſe are our enemies who are richer and more happy than we;" ſo we may aſſure ourſelves, that after their example, moſt men declare war againſt the wiſe. They hate in him a moderation of temper, which reducing his deſires to his poſſeſſions, makes him a reproach to their conduct, and renders the wiſe too independent on them. They regard this independence as the ſeed of all the vices, becauſe they perceive that the ſource of humanity would be dried up, as ſoon as a period was put to their reciprocal wants.

Theſe wiſe men ought, however, to be very dear to ſociety. If extraordinary wiſdom ſometimes renders them indifferent with reſpect to the friendſhip of particular perſons; it alſo makes them, as we find from the example of the Abbe de Saint Pierre, and Fontenelle, pour out on human nature in general, all thoſe tender ſenſations, which the moſt lively paſſions force us to laviſh on a ſingle individual. Far different from thoſe men who are not good, becauſe they have been impoſed upon, and whoſe goodneſs decreaſes in proportion as they obtain more knowlege; the wiſe man alone may be conſtantly good, becauſe he alone knows mankind. Their wickedneſs does not fill him with indignation: he, like Democritus, ſees in them none but fools, or children, againſt whom it would be ridiculous to be offended, and who are more worthy of pity than of anger. He conſiders them with the eye of a mechanic who examines the working of a machine, and, without inſulting humanity, complains that nature has united the preſervation of one being, to the deſtruction of another; that to afford nouriſhment he orders the hawk, to ſeize in his talons the dove; made it neceſſary for the inſect to be devoured; and rendered every being an aſſaſſin.

If the laws alone are diſpaſſionate judges, the wiſe man, in this reſpect, reſembles the laws. His indifference is always juſt and impartial; this ought always to be conſidered as one of the greateſt virtues of a placeman, whoſe too great want of friends always lays under the neceſſity of being guilty of ſome act of injuſtice.

In fine, the wiſe man alone may be generous, becauſe he is independent. Thoſe united by reciprocal bonds of utility, cannot be liberal to each other. Friendſhip can only make exchanges, and nothing but independence can offer gifts.

(m) If we loved a friend only for himſelf, we ſhould never conſider any thing but his happineſs; we ſhould not reproach him for being ſo long without ſeeing or writing to us: we ſhould ſay that he had probably ſpent his time more agreeably; and ſhould rejoice in his happineſs.

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our honour, our credit, and our reputation. Are we in low circumſtances? We ſeek with the ſame friend the means of delivering ourſelves from indigence: and his converſation ſaves us, at leaſt, the wearineſs we ſhould feel, while under misfortunes, from the pain of engaging in indifferent converſations. It is always of theſe pains, or of theſe pleaſures, that a perſon talks to his friend. Now if there are no true pleaſures or pains, as I have already proved, but phyſical pain and pleaſure; if the means of procuring them ariſe from the pleaſure of hope, which ſuppoſes the exiſtence of the firſt, and are only a conſequence of them; it follows, that friendſhip, as well as avarice, pride, ambition, and the other paſſions, is the immediate effect of phyſical ſenſibility.

As the laſt proof this truth, I am going to ſhew, that, with the aſſiſtance of theſe pleaſures and pains, we may excite in our minds all kinds of paſſions; and that therefore the pleaſures and pains of ſenſe, are the prolific ſeed of all ſentiment.

CHAP. XV.

That the fear of natural Pain, or the deſire of natural Pleaſure, may excite all the Paſſions.

IF we open hiſtory, we ſhall find, that in all the countries where certain virtues were encouraged by the hope of ſenſual pleaſures, theſe virtues were more common, and caſt a greater luſtre.

Why were the Cretans, the Bœotians, and in general, all the people moſt addicted to love, moſt diſtinguiſhed by their bravery? It is becauſe the women granted their favours only to the brave; becauſe the pleaſures of love, as Plutarch and Plato obſerve, are moſt proper to exalt the minds of the people, and the moſt worthy of rewarding heroes and virtuous men.

It was probably from this motive that the Roman ſenate, the vile flatterers of Cæſar, reſolved, as ſome hiſtorians relate, to grant him, by an expreſs law, the right of enjoying all the Roman ladies. This is alſo the reaſon, which, according to the Grecian manners, made Plato ſay, that after a battle, the moſt beautiful ought to be the reward of the moſt valiant; a project of which Epaminondas himſelf had ſome idea, ſince at the battle of Leuctra, he placed the lover by the ſide of his miſtreſs; a method which he always conſidered as moſt proper to ſecure military ſucceſs. How greatly indeed are we influenced by the pleaſures of ſenſe! they rendered the ſacred battalion of the Thebans invincible; they inſpired ancient nations with the greateſt courage, when the conquerors divided between them the riches and the women of the conquered; they, in ſhort, formed the character of thoſe virtuous Samnites, among whom the greateſt beauty was the reward of the greateſt virtue.

To confirm this truth by a more circumſtantial example, let us examine by what means the famous Lycurgus diffuſed into the hearts of his fellow citizens the enthuſiaſm, and, if I may uſe the term, the fever of virtue; and, we ſhall ſee,

ſee, that if no people ſurpaſſed the Lacedæmonians in courage, it was becauſe no people honoured virtue more, and gave greater rewards to valour. Let us call to mind thoſe ſolemn feſtivals, where, according to the laws of Lycurgus, the young and beautiful Lacedæmonian women advanced half naked, and danced in the aſſembly of the people. There, in the preſence of the nation, they inſulted by ſtrokes of ſatire, thoſe who had in battle diſcovered any ſymptoms of cowardice; and celebrated in their ſongs the young warriors who had diſtinguiſhed themſelves by ſome great exploits. Now, who can doubt, that the coward, made a butt before the whole nation, at which theſe young girls ſhot their bittereſt raillery, muſt be tormented with ſhame and confuſſion, and filled with the moſt ſevere repentance? What a triumph, on the contrary, was here for the young heroes, who received the palm of glory from the hand of beauty; who read eſteem in the countenances of the old men, and love in the eyes of the fair, with the aſſurance of theſe favours, the very hope of which is a pleaſure? Can we doubt that the young warrior was then intoxicated with virtue? Thus the Spartans, eager for the fight, ruſhed with fury into the midſt of the enemies battalions, and on every ſide ſurrounded with death, ſought for nothing but glory. Every thing in this legiſlation concurred to metamorphoſe men into heroes. But to eſtabliſh it, Lycurgus muſt have been convinced, that pleaſure is the only and univerſal principle of action, and been ſenſible that women, who every where elſe ſeem like the flowers of a fine garden, to be only made for the ornament of the earth, and to pleaſe the eye, might be applied to a nobler uſe; that the fair, ſunk and degraded among almoſt all the people of the world, might enter into a partnerſhip of glory with the men, divide with them the laurels they made them gather, and at length become one of the moſt powerful ſprings of the legiſlation.

Indeed, if the pleaſure of love is to man the moſt lively of his pleaſures, what fruitful ſeeds of courage are included in it, and what ardour for brave actions may be inſpired by the deſire of women (a)?

Whoever will examine himſelf in this particular, will be ſenſible, that if the Spartans had been more numerous, that if more in fancy could have been heaped on the coward, that if it had been poſſible to have paid ſtill more reſpect and homage to valour, Sparta would have carried ſtill further the enthuſiaſm of virtue.

Let us ſuppoſe as a proof of this, that penetrating, if I may thus expreſs myſelf, more deeply into the views of nature, ſhe had adorned beautiful women with ſo many charms, and affixed the higheſt degree of pleaſure to their enjoyment, to render them the reward of the moſt exalted courage. Let us ſuppoſe alſo, that after the example of thoſe virgins, conſecrated to Iris or to Veſta, the moſt beautiful of the Spartan ladies had been conſecrated to merit; that being preſented naked in the aſſemblies of the people, they had been carried off by the warriors, as prizes obtained by their courage; and that theſe young heroes had experienced at the ſame inſtant, the double intoxication of love

(a) To what dreadful dangers did it expoſe David himſelf, when to obtain Michal, he laid himſelf under an obligation to cut off, and bring to Saul, the foreſkins of two hundred Philiſtines?

and

and glory: however fantaſtical and diſtant from our manners this may appear, it is certain that it would have rendered the Spartans ſtill more brave and valiant, ſince the force of virtue is always proportioned to the pleaſure allotted for its reward.

I ſhall obſerve on this ſubject, that, chimerical as this cuſtom is in appearance, it is ſtill in uſe in the kingdom of Biſnagar, of which Narſinga is the capital. To raiſe the courage of the warriors, the king of that country, according to to the accounts of travellers, purchaſes, entertains, and dreſſes in the moſt magnificent manner, beautiful women, ſolely appropriated to the pleaſures of the warriors, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by ſome glorious exploits. By this means he inſpires his ſubjects with the greateſt courage; and draws to his court all the warriors of the neighbouring nations, who, flattered by the hope of enjoying theſe beautiful women, abandon their country, and ſettle at Marſinga, where they feed only on the fleſh of lions and tygers, and drink nothing but the blood of thoſe animals (b).

It follows from the abovementioned examples, that the pains and pleaſures of the ſenſes are capable of inſpiring all the paſſions, ſenſations, and virtues. Therefore, without having recourſe to diſtant ages and countries, I ſhall cite, as the laſt proof of this truth, thoſe ages of chivalry, when the women taught their pupil knights, both the art and the catechiſm of love.

In theſe times, as Machiavel remarks, and ſo early as when the French made their deſcent into Italy, they appeared ſo brave and ſo ſenſible to the poſterity of the Romans, that they were animated by the greateſt courage; becauſe, as that hiſtorian adds, the women granted their favours only to the moſt valiant. In order to judge of the merit and tenderneſs of a lover, they required proofs that he had taken priſoners in wars, ſcaled the walls of a city, or taken a poſt from an enemy. They choſe rather to have a lover periſh than to fly. A knight was then obliged to fight, in order to maintain the beauty of his lady, and the exceſs of his tenderneſs. The exploits of the knights were the perpetual ſubjects of converſation and romances, that always recommended galantry. The poets direct the knight in the midſt of the dangers of the battle, to have the picture of his lady preſent in his mind; and in tournaments, before the charge was ſounded, he was to lift up his eyes to his miſtreſs, as the following ballad proves:

Servants d'amour, regardez doucement,
Aux eſchaffands, anges de paradis;
Lors jouſterez fort & joyeuſement,
Et vous ſerez honorez & cheris.

(b) The women among the Gelons were obliged by the laws to do all the works that required ſtrength, as building of houſes, and cultivating the earth: but to reward them for their pains, the ſame law granted them the privilege of lying with every warrior they liked. The women were much attached to this law. See Bardezanes, quoted by Euſebius in his Evangelical Preparation.

The inhabitants of Florida have a very ſtrong and agreeable drink, which they never preſent to any, except the warriors, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their bravery. Collect. of edifying letters.

Which

Which may be thus tranſlated:

Ye gallant knights, before ye toſs the lance,
Or to the deeds of chivalry advance,
Behold that radient circle of the fair,
To thoſe bright forms direct your votive pray'r;
Implore the aid of their angelic eyes,
Nor fear to die, when beauty is the prize.

Thus, every thing dictated love; and by what more powerful motive can the mind be affected? Is not the ſtep, the look, the leaſt geſture of beauty ſufficient to charm and intoxicate themſelves? Is it not in the power of women to give ſouls and bodies at their pleaſure, to the fool and the feeble? And did not the Phœnicians, under the names of Venus, or Aſtarte, raiſe altars to beauty?

Theſe altars could only be pulled down by our religion: for what object can there be, to him who is not enlightened by the eye of faith, more worthy of our adoration, than that to which heaven has granted the precious truſt of the moſt lively of our pleaſures? Pleaſures, whoſe enjoyment alone may enable us to ſupport the painful burthen of life, and comfort us under the misfortunes that attend our exiſtence.

The general concluſion of what I have ſaid on the origin of our paſſions, is, that ſenſual pain and pleaſure give thought and action to man, and are the only counterpoiſe that moves the moral world.

The paſſions are then in us the immediate effect of phyſical ſenſibility: now, all men are ſuſceptible and ſenſible of paſſions; all conſequently carry within them the prolific ſeeds of the mental faculties. But, it may be ſaid, that though all men have ſenſibility, they have it not in the ſame degree; thus, for inſtance, we ſee whole nations indifferent with reſpect to a love of glory and virtue: now if men are not ſuſceptible of ſuch ſtrong paſſions, if all are not capable of the ſame continuance of attention, that muſt be conſidered as the cauſe of the great inequality of their intellectual faculties: whence it follows, that nature has not given to all men the ſame mental powers.

In anſwer to this objection, it is not neceſſary to enquire, whether all men are endued with equal ſenſibility; this queſtion, which would be more difficult to reſolve than is imagined, would be foreign to my ſubject. What I propoſe is to enquire, whether all men are not at leaſt ſuſceptible of paſſions ſtrong enough to furniſh them with that continued attention, neceſſary to give a ſuperiority of mind.

For this purpoſe, I ſhall firſt refute the argument drawn from the inſenſibility of certain nations, to the paſſion and glory of virtue; an argument from which ſome have endeavoured to prove, that all men are not ſuſceptible of paſſions. I ſay then, that the inſenſibility of theſe nations ought not to be attributed to nature, but to accidental cauſes, ſuch as the different forms of governments.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

To what cauſe we ought to attribute the indifference of certain Nations with regard to Virtue.

TO determine whether the indifference of certain nations with reſpect to virtue, depends on nature, or the particular form of governments, we muſt firſt know man; penetrate even into the abyſs of the human heart; and recollect, that, being born ſenſible of pleaſure and pain, he owes, to this phyſical ſenſibility, his paſſions; and that to his paſſions he owes all his virtues and vices.

Theſe principles being laid down, in order to reſolve the queſtion above propoſed, we muſt at length examine, whether the ſame paſſions, on being moulded by different forms of government, do not produce in human beings, the oppoſite vices and virtues.

Suppoſe a man be ſo in love with glory, as to ſacrifice to it all his other paſſions: if, by the form of government, glory is conſtantly the reward of virtuous actions, it is evident, this man will be always under a neceſſity of being virtuous; and that to form a Leonidas, and an Horatius Cocles, there needs no more than to place him in a country and circumſtances like theirs.

But, it is objected, that there are few men who raiſe the paſſion to this height. To which, I reply, that none but the man who enters deeply into this paſſion, can penetrate into the ſanctuary of virtue. This is not the caſe with reſpect to the men incapable of lively paſſions, and are called honeſt men: if the latter are kept in the path of virtue, at a diſtance from this ſanctuary, it proceeds from their being conſtantly held there by the fetters of indolence, which they have not the ſtrength to break.

The virtue of the former is alone rational and active; but it does not increaſe, or at leaſt arrive at a certain height, except in warlike republics; becauſe in no other form of government the public eſteem can raiſe them above other men, and procure them greater reſpect; this eſteem is therefore the moſt pleaſing, the moſt deſirable, and the moſt proper to produce great effects.

The virtue of the latter being grafted on indolence, and produced, in a manner, by the abſence of ſtrong paſſions, is only a paſſive virtue, which being attended with little knowledge, may be dangerous in the firſt and moſt important poſts, though otherwiſe it is a ſure guide. It is common to all who are called honeſt men, who are more eſteemed for the evils they do not commit, than for the good they perform.

With reſpect to the men of ſtrong paſſions, whom I have juſt mentioned, it is evident, that the ſame deſire of glory, which in the early ages of the Roman republic, produced ſuch men as Curtius and Decius, muſt have formed a Marius and an Octavius in thoſe periods of trouble and revolutions, when

glory, as in the latter times of the republic, was only connected with tyranny and power. What I have ſaid of the paſſion for glory, I apply to the love of eſteem, which is only a diminutive of the love of glory, and the object that attracts the deſires of thoſe who cannot ariſe to fame.

This deſire of eſteem muſt in like manner produce, in different ages, oppoſite virtues and vices. When intereſt is a ſurer path to preferment than merit, this deſire makes men of intrigue and flatterers; when money is more honoured than virtue, it produces avaricious men, who ſeek for riches, with as much eagerneſs as the firſt Romans fled from them, when they were aſhamed to have them in their poſſeſſion: whence I conclude, that from the influence of different manners and governments, the ſame deſire muſt neceſſarily produce a Cincinnatus, a Papyrius, a Craſſus, and a Sejanus.

I ſhall obſerve, by the way, on this ſubject, the difference there is between the ambitious of glory, and the ambitious of high-poſts, or of riches. The firſt can never be otherwiſe than great criminals, becauſe great crimes, from the ſuperiority of the talents neceſſary to the commiſſion of them, and the extraordinary advantages united with the ſucceſs, can alone impoſe ſo far on the imagination of mankind, as to extort their admiration; an admiration founded on the inward and ſecret deſire of reſembling theſe illuſtrious criminals. Every man in love with glory, is then incapable of all little crimes. If this paſſion made a Cromwell, it never made a Cartouche. From whence I conclude, that Sylla and Cæſar, in any other ſituations than thoſe uncommon and extraordinary ones, in which they found themſelves, would, by the nature even of their paſſions, have remained faithful to virtue; while the cunning and avaricious, influenced by the baſeneſs and obſcurity of their vices, have daily opportunities of committing new ones.

Having ſhewn how the ſame paſſion which impels us to the love and practice of virtue, may in different ages and governments produce the oppoſite vices; let us now endeavour to penetrate more deeply into the human heart; and diſcover, why, in any government whatſoever, man, variable in his conduct, is determined by his paſſions ſometimes to good, and at others to bad actions: and why, his heart is an amphitheatre, always open to the conteſts between virtue and vice.

In order to reſolve this moral problem, it is neceſſary to ſearch into the cauſe of the ſucceſſive diſquietude and ſleep of conſcience, into the ſource of thoſe confuſed and various emotions of ſoul, and of thoſe inward ſtruggles which the tragic poet preſents with ſuch ſucceſs on the ſtage, only becauſe the ſpectators have all had the ſame inward feelings; and we muſt ask ourſelves, what are theſe two ſelfs, which Paſchal (a) and ſome Indian philoſophers have acknowleged in their own breaſts?

(a) In the ſchool of Vedantam, the Brachmans of that ſect teach, that there are two principles; the one poſitive, which is the ME; the other negative, to which they give the name of Maya, or OF ME, that is error. Wiſdom conſiſts in delivering ourſelves from Maya, and in perſuading ourſelves, by a conſtant application, that the ME is the only eternal, infinite being: the key of the deliverance is in theſe words, the ME is the ſupreme being.

To diſcover the univerſal cauſe of all theſe effects, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that men are not moved by one ſingle ſpecies of ſenſations; that none of them are completely animated by thoſe ſolitary paſſions, that fill the whole capacity of the ſoul; that, drawn by turns by different paſſions, ſome of which are conformable, and others contrary to the general intereſt, every man is ſubject to two different attractions; one of which leads him to virtue, and the other to vice. I ſay every man, for the probity of none was ever more univerſally acknowleged, than that of Cato and Brutus, becauſe no man can flatter himſelf with being more virtuous than theſe two Romans: the former however, ſurprized by a deſire of avarice, committed ſome inſtances of extortions in his government; and the latter, moved by the entreaties of his daughter, obtained of the ſenate, in favour of Bibulus, his ſon-in-law, a grant he had refuſed to Cicero, his friend, on account of its being contrary to the intereſt of the republic. This is the cauſe of the mixture of vice and virtue perceivable in all hearts; and the reaſon why there is neither pure virtue nor unmixed vice upon earth.

Now, in order to know what it is that denominates a man virtuous or vicious, it muſt be obſerved, that among the paſſions by which every man is animated, there is neceſſarily one that principally preſides over his conduct, and has a greater influence over his mind than all the others.

In proportion then, as the latter commands more or leſs imperiouſly, and is in its own nature, or from particular circumſtances, uſeful or prejudicial to the ſtate, the man is more frequently determined either to good or to evil, and receives the name of virtuous or vicious.

I ſhall only add, that the ſtrength of his virtues or vices will be always proportioned to the vivacity of his paſſions, and their ſtrength to the degree of pleaſure he receives from indulging them. For this reaſon, in early youth, which is moſt ſenſible of pleaſure, and of the ſtrength of the paſſions, we are generally capable of greater actions.

The moſt exalted virtue, as well as the moſt ſhameful vice, is the effect of the greater or leſs intenſeneſs of the pleaſure it affords us.

Thus we can form no exact idea of the degree of our virtue, till we have diſcovered, by a ſcrupulous examination, the number and degrees of thoſe pains which a paſſion, as for inſtance, the love of juſtice or of glory, may enable us to ſupport. The perſon to whom eſteem is every thing, and life nothing, will, like Socrates, ſubmit rather to ſuffer death, than meanly to beg for life. He who is become the ſoul of a republican ſtate, in which pride and glory render him paſſionately deſirous of the public welfare, will, like Cato, prefer death, to the mortification of ſeeing himſelf and his country ſubmit to the yoke of arbitrary power. But ſuch actions are the effect of the greateſt love of glory. This is the higheſt pitch to which the ſtrongeſt paſſions can attain, and here nature has fixed the bounds of human virtue.

In vain would we deceive ourſelves; we neceſſarily become the enemies of men, when we can no otherwiſe be happy, but by their misfortunes (b). It is the pleaſing conformity we find between our own intereſt and that of the public,

(b) *Secundum id quod amplius nos delectat operemur neceſſe eſt*, ſays St. Auguſtin.

a conformity generally produced by the desire of esteem, that gives us those tender sentiments that are rewarded by their affection. He who to be virtuous must always conquer his inclinations, must necessarily be a wicked man. The meritorious virtues are never certain and infallible virtues (c). It is impossible, in practice for a man to deliver himself up, in a manner, daily to a war with the passions, without losing many battles.

Being always forced to yield to the most powerful interest some of that love for esteem, we never sacrifice any great pleasure to it, but those it procures. If, on certain occasions, sacred personages have sometimes exposed themselves to the contempt of the public, it is because they would not sacrifice their salvation to their glory; and if some women resist the solicitations of a prince, it is because they believe, that his conquest would not recompence them for the loss of their esteem: thus, there are few insensible to the love of a king, who is young and charming; and none who resist such beneficent, amiable, and powerful beings, as we paint the sylphs and genii, who, by a thousand allurements can at once intoxicate all the senses of a mortal.

This truth, founded on self-love, is not only known, but even acknowleged by the legislators.

Convinced that self-love is, in general, the strongest passion of mankind, the legislators have never pronounced it criminal, for a man to kill another in his own defence, nor blamed a citizen for not devoting himself to death, like Decius, for the preservation of his country.

The virtuous man is not then he who sacrifices his pleasures, habits, and strongest passions to the public welfare, since it is impossible that such a man should exist (d); but he whose strongest passion is so conformable to the general interest, that he is almost constantly necessitated to be virtuous. For this reason, he approaches nearer to perfection, and has a greater claim to the name of being a virtuous man, who requires stronger motives of pleasure, and a more powerful interest, in order to determine him to do a bad action, than are necessary to his performing a good one, and consequently supposes that he has a greater passion for virtue than for vice.

Cæsar was, without doubt, not the most virtuous among the Romans; yet if he would not renounce the title of a good citizen, without taking that of the master of the world, we have not, perhaps, a right to banish him from the class of honest men. In fact, among the virtuous, who really deserve that title, how few are there, who, if placed in the same circumstances as Cæsar was, would refuse the sceptre of the world, especially if, like Cæsar, they thought they had those superior talents that secure the success of great enterprizes? Less abilities would perhaps render them better citizens; and a moderate degree of

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(c) In the harem it is not to the meritorious virtues, but to impotency, that the Grand Seignior intrusts his women.

(d) If some men have seemed to sacrifice their interest to the public welfare, it is because, in a good form of government, the idea of virtue is so united to that of happiness, and the idea of vice to that of contempt, that they are hurried away by a lively sensation, the origin of which is not always to be discovered; and from this motive perform actions, that are often contrary to their interest.

virtue,

virtue, ſupported by a greater anxiety for the ſucceſs, would be ſufficient to deter them from engaging in ſo bold a project. Indeed ſometimes a want of talents preſerves us from vice; and frequently to the ſame defect we owe all our virtues.

We are on the contrary leſs virtuous, as leſs powerful motives lead us to the commiſſion of a crime. Such, for inſtance, is that of ſome of the emperors of Morocco, who, ſolely from the motive of making a parade of their dexterity, would, with one blow of a ſabre, in mounting a horſe, cut off the head of the groom who held the ſtirrup.

This is what diſtinguiſhes the virtuous from the vicious man, in a manner the moſt clear, preciſe, and conformable to experience; on this plan the public might make an exact thermometer, which would ſhew the various degrees of virtue and vice in each citizen, if, by penetrating to the bottom of the heart, we could diſcover there the value that each ſets on his virtue. But the impoſſibility of arriving at this knowlege, forces us to judge of men only by their actions; a judgment extremely faulty in every particular, but on the whole ſufficiently conformable to the general intereſt, and almoſt as uſeful as if it was juſt.

After having enquired into the influence of the paſſions, and explained the cauſe of that mixture of virtue and vice obſervable in all men; having ſtated the limits of virtue, and at length fixed the idea that belongs to the word virtuous; we are now at liberty to judge, if we ought to attribute the indifference of certain nations for virtue, to nature, or to a particular legiſlation.

If pleaſure be the only object of man's purſuit, we need only imitate nature, in order to inſpire a love of virtue. Pleaſure informs us of what ſhe would have done, and pain what ſhe forbids, and man will readily obey her mandates. Why may not a legiſlature, armed with the ſame power, produce the ſame effects? Were men without paſſions, there would be no means of producing a reformation; but the love of pleaſure, againſt which men, poſſeſſed of a probity more venerable than enlightened, have conſtantly exclaimed, is a bridle by which the paſſions of the individuals might always be directed to the public good. The hatred moſt men have for virtue, is not then the effect of the corruption (e) of their nature, but of the imperfection of the legiſlation. It is the legiſlation, if I may venture to ſay ſo, that excites us to vice, by mingling it with pleaſure; the great art of the legiſlator is that of ſeparating them, and making no proportion between the advantage the villain can receive from his crime, and the pain to which he expoſes himſelf. If among the rich men, who are often leſs virtuous than the indigent, we ſee few robbers and aſſaſſins, it

(e) If robbers are as faithful to the agreements made between themſelves, as honeſt men, it is becauſe the common danger, by which they are united, neceſſitates them to it. From the ſame motive people diſcharge their debts contracted at play, and with ſuch aſſurance become bankrupts to their creditors. Now if intereſt makes villains do what virtue makes honeſt men perform, who can doubt that by dexterouſly managing the principle of intereſt, a judicious legiſlator might lay all men under a neceſſity of being virtuous.

is becauſe the profit obtained by robbery is never to a rich man proportionable to the hazard of a capital puniſhment: but this is not the caſe with reſpect to the indigent; for the diſproportion falling infinitely ſhort of being ſo great with reſpect to him, virtue and vice, are in a manner placed in an equilibrium. Not that I would here pretend to inſinuate, that men ought to be driven as with a rod of iron. In an excellent legiſlation, and among a virtuous people, contempt, which deprives man of all conſolation, and leaves him deſolate in the midſt of his native country, is a motive ſufficient to form virtuous minds. Every other kind of puniſhment renders men timid, inactive, and ſtupid. The kind of virtue produced by the fear of puniſhment reſembles its origin; this virtue is puſilanimous, and without knowlege; or rather fear, which only ſmothers vice, but produces no virtues. True virtue is founded on the love of eſteem and glory, and the fear of contempt, which is more terrible than death itſelf. I cannot cite here a more appoſite example, than the anſwer which the Engliſh Spectator puts into the mouth of a ſoldier fond of duelling, who thus addreſſes Pharamond, who reproached him for having diſobeyed his orders. How could I obey ſuch orders, ſaid the ſoldier? Thou puniſheſt indeed with Death thoſe who violate them; but with Infamy thoſe who obey them. Know then, that I fear death leſs than infamy.

I might conclude from what I have ſaid, that the love or indifference of certain nations for virtue, does not ariſe from nature, but from the different conſtitutions of ſtates: but however juſt this concluſion might be, it would not be ſufficiently proved, if I did not endeavour to throw more light on this ſubject, by ſearching more particularly in ſuch governments as are either free or deſpotic, for the cauſes of this love or indifference for virtue. I ſhall firſt enquire into the nature of a deſpotic government; and, in order to obtain a more accurate knowlege of this ſubject, I ſhall examine what motive it is, that can excite in man, ſuch an unbridled luſt of arbitrary power, as is felt in the eaſt.

I chuſe the eaſt for an example, becauſe an indifference with reſpect to virtue is no where conſtantly felt, but in governments of that kind. In vain do ſome jealous neighbouring nations accuſe us with already bending under the yoke of eaſtern deſpotic power: I ſay that our religion does not permit princes to uſurp ſuch a power; that our conſtitution is monarchical and not deſpotic; that the individuals may conſequently be ſtripped of their property by law, but not by arbitrary authority; and that our princes claim the title of monarch, and not that of uncontroulable ſovereigns; that they acknowlege themſelves bound by the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and declare themſelves the fathers, and not the tyrants of their ſubjects. Beſides, a deſpotic power could not be eſtabliſhed in France, without the whole country being ſoon ſubdued. This kingdom is not like Turkey, and Perſia; thoſe empires are defended by vaſt deſarts, and their immenſe extent ſupplying the depopulation occaſioned by deſpotic power, always furniſhes freſh armies for the ſultan. In a country like ours, ſurrounded by wiſe and powerful nations, the minds of the people could not be ſunk with impunity; and France depopulated by tyranny, would ſoon fall a prey to theſe nations. The prince in loading the hands of his ſubjects with irons, would only bow them to the yoke of ſlavery, to render himſelf ſubject to the yoke of the neighbouring princes. It is then impoſſible for him to form ſuch a project.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the univerſal deſire of being deſpotic; the means employed to arrive at this power, and the danger to which it expoſes kings.

THIS deſire derives its ſource from the love of pleaſure, and conſequently from the nature of man himſelf. Every one would be as happy as poſſible; every one would be inveſted with the power of forcing men to contribute to their happineſs to the utmoſt of their power; and for this reaſon every one deſires to command.

All people are either governed according to laws and eſtabliſhed conventions, or by an arbitrary will. In the firſt caſe, the power over them is leſs arbitrary, and they are not under ſo great a neceſſity of pleaſing the prince; beſides, he that would govern a people according to their laws muſt know them, reflect upon them, and endure the fatigue of ſtudying them: from which, indolence always ſeeks to be delivered. In order to gratify this indolence, he aſpires to an abſolute power, which, exempting him from all care, ſtudy, and the fatigue of attention, makes his fellow creatures the abject ſlaves of his will.

According to Ariſtotle, a deſpotic government is that in which all men are ſlaves, and only one free.

This is the motive that induces every man to deſire to be deſpotic. In order to be ſo, he muſt demoliſh the power both of the great, and of the common people, and conſequently divide the intereſt of the citizens. In a long ſucceſſion of ages, opportunities will offer, and almoſt all ſovereigns being animated by a view of their intereſt, more lively than rational, embrace them with avidity.

On this anarchy of intereſts is eſtabliſhed the deſpotic power of the eaſt, reſembling the picture given by Milton of the empire of Chaos, which, ſays he, extends its royal pavilion over a barren and waſteful abyſs, where Confuſion, involved in herſelf, maintains the anarchy and diſcord of the elements, and governs each atom with a ſcepter of iron.

A diviſion being once ſown between the citizens, it is neceſſary to debaſe and degrade their minds, by brandiſhing the ſword of tyranny, and making it dazzle in their eyes; to place the virtues in the rank of crimes, and to puniſh them as ſuch. To what cruelties of this kind have not only the deſpotic power of the eaſt, but even that of the Roman emperors been carried? Under the reign of Domitian, ſays Tacitus, the virtues were decrees of death. Rome ſwarmed with informers; the ſlave was a ſpy on his maſter, the freedman on his patron, the friend on his friend. In thoſe calamitous ages, the virtuous man did not adviſe the commiſſion of crimes, but he was obliged to wink at them. Had he ſhewn more courage and firmneſs on ſuch occaſions, it would have been treated as a crime againſt the ſtate. Among the degenerate Romans, weakneſs was

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the heroiſm. In that reign were puniſhed Senecio and Ruſticus, the panegyriſts of the virtues of Thraſea and Helvidius; thoſe illuſtrious orators were treated as criminals of ſtate, and their works burnt by public authority. Celebrated writers, ſuch as Pliny, were reduced to compoſe grammatical books, becauſe every work on a more elevated ſubject, might have given umbrage to the tyrant, and have been dangerous to the author. The learned, who had been invited to Rome by an Auguſtus, a Veſpaſian, an Antoninus, and a Trajan, were baniſhed by a Nero, a Caligula, a Domitian, and a Caracalla: the philoſophers were driven away, and the ſciences proſcribed. Theſe tyrants, ſays Tacitus, endeavoured to obliterate whatever had the marks of genius and virtue.

By thus keeping the mind in the perpetual tremours of fear, tyranny debaſes it to her purpoſes. It is ſhe who in the eaſt has invented thoſe cruel tortures and puniſhments practiſed there (a); puniſhments ſometimes neceſſary in thoſe deteſtable countries, becauſe the people are invited to commit crimes, not only by their miſery, but alſo by the example of the ſultan, who teaches them to deſpiſe juſtice.

Theſe are both the motives on which the love of deſpotic authority is founded, and the means employed to arrive at it. Thus fooliſhly in love with arbitrary power, kings inconſiderately throw themſelves into a road interrupted by a thouſand precipices, down which a thouſand tyrants have fallen. Let us here venture, for the good of human nature, and that of ſovereigns, to lend them ſome light, and to ſhew them the dangers to which, under ſuch a government, they and their people are expoſed. Let them from hence forward keep far from them every perfidious counſel, that inſpires them with the deſire of arbitrary power; and let them at length know, that the ſtrongeſt and moſt maſterly treatiſe againſt tyranny, would be a treatiſe on the happineſs and preſervation of kings.

But, it is ſaid, who can conceal this truth from them? Why do not they compare the ſmall number of princes baniſhed from England, with the prodigious number of Greek and Turkiſh emperors murdered on the throne of Conſtantinople? If the ſultans, I reply, are not deterred by theſe terrible examples, it is from their not having this picture habitually preſent to their minds: it is from their being continually prompted to deſpotiſm, by the wretches who would ſhare with them the arbitrary power; and becauſe moſt of the eaſtern princes, being governed by the will of a vizier, yield, through weakneſs, to his deſires, and are not ſufficiently informed of their injuſtice, by the noble reſiſtance of their ſubjects.

The entrance into deſpotiſm is eaſy. The people ſeldom foreſee the evils a confirmed tyranny prepares for them; and if they at laſt perceive it, it is not till they ſink under the yoke, are changed on all ſides, and being unable to defend themſelves, only wait trembling for the puniſhment to which they muſt be condemned.

(a) The puniſhments in uſe almoſt all over the eaſt, fill the human mind with horror; becauſe the tyrant who orders them, is himſelf above the laws. This is not the caſe in republics, where the laws are always mild, becauſe thoſe who eſtabliſh, ſubmit to them.

Emboldened

Emboldened by the weakneſs of the people, the princes become deſpotic tyrants. They do not know, that they themſelves ſuſpend over their heads the ſword that is to give them the mortal blow; that to abrogate all law, and reduce every thing to arbitrary power, they muſt perpetually have recourſe to force, and often employ the ſoldier's ſword. Now, the habitual cuſtom of making uſe of ſuch methods, either provokes the citizens to revolt, and invites them to revenge, or inſenſibly accuſtoms them to know no other juſtice than force.

Tho' a long time be required to ſpread ſuch an idea among the people, it forces its way at laſt, and reaches even to the ſoldiers, who, at length perceiving that no collective body in the ſtate is capable of reſiſting them, and that the prince, odious to his ſubjects, owes all his power to them, their ſouls are open to the moſt audacious projects, and they long to better their condition. If then a bold and courageous man flatters them with the hope of plundering ſome great cities; ſuch a man, as all hiſtory proves, is ſufficient to cauſe a revolution; a revolution that is always ſpeedily followed by a ſecond; ſince in deſpotic ſtates, as the illuſtrious preſident de Monteſquieu obſerves, the tyrants are often aſſaſſinated, without deſtroying the tyranny. When once the ſoldiers know their ſtrength, it is impoſſible to keep them within juſt bounds. I could cite on this occaſion, all the Roman emperors proſcribed by the Pretorian bands, for reſolving to free the country from the tyranny of the ſoldiers, and to re-eſtabliſh the ancient diſcipline of the army.

The deſpotic tyrant then, in order to command ſlaves, is forced in his turn to obey his ever turbulent and imperious troops. But the caſe is very different, when the prince has created in the ſtate a powerful body of magiſtrates, by whom the people being judged, obtain ideas of juſtice and equity; the ſoldiers being always taken out of the body of the citizens, preſerved in their new ſtate ſome idea of juſtice; beſides, they are ſenſible that the entire body of the citizens, called together by the prince and the magiſtrates, under the ſtandard of the laws, would oppoſe any bold attempt, and let the valour of the army be ever ſo great, it muſt at length be overpowered by numbers. Hence, the ſoldiers are kept within the bounds of duty, by ſentiments of juſtice and fear.

A powerful body of magiſtrates is then neceſſary to the ſafety of kings: it is a buckler, behind which both the prince and people are ſheltered, the one from the madneſs of ſedition, and the other from the cruelties of tyranny.

The Khalif Aaron Al-Raſchid reflecting on this ſubject, in order to preſerve himſelf from the dangers, which, on all ſides ſurround deſpotic princes, one day asked his brother, the celebrated Beloulh, what advice he could give him on the manner of reigning well? 'Make thy will, ſaid he, conformable to the 'laws, and not the laws to thy will. Reflect, that men without merit are al-'ways craving, and that great men are ſo modeſt that they ſeldom ask; refuſe 'then the requeſts of the one, and prevent thoſe of the other. Load not thy 'people with taxes too burthenſome; and recollect on this ſubject, the advice 'which king Nouchirvon the juſt, gave to his ſon Ormous: "My ſon, ſaid "he, No body will be happy in thine empire, if thou thinkeſt only of pleaſure. "When thou art reclined on thy pillow, and ready to taſte the ſweets of ſleep, "remember thoſe whom oppreſſion keeps awake; when a ſplendid repaſt ſhall

" ſerved up before thee, think on thoſe who languiſh in miſery; when thou " rambleſt through the delightful groves of thine harem, remember that there " are thoſe who are unfortunate, and whom tyranny keeps in irons." I ſhall ' only add one word more, ſaid Beloulh; receive into thy favour men emi- ' nent in the ſciences, and conduct thyſelf by their advice, in order that mo- ' narchy may be obedient to the written law, and not the law to mo- ' narchy (b).'

Themiſtius (c) being commiſſioned by the ſenate to harangue Jovianus, on his advancement to the throne, made nearly the ſame diſcourſe to that emperor: " Remember, ſaid he, that though the army has raiſed thee to the empire, thou " muſt learn from the philoſophers the art of governing; the firſt has given thee " the purple of the Cæſars; but the latter will teach thee how to wear it " worthily."

Even among the ancient Perſians, the moſt abject and daſtardly of all people, the philoſophers, who inaugurated the princes, were allowed to repeat theſe words to them, at their coronation (d): " Know, O king, that thine authority " ſhall ceaſe to be lawful, on the very day that thou ceaſeſt to render the " Perſians happy." A truth, of which Trajan appears to be fully ſenſible, when, being raiſed to the throne, and preſenting the ſword, as uſual, to the præfectus pretorio, he ſaid, " Receive from me this ſword, and make " uſe of it under my reign, either to defend in me a juſt prince, or to puniſh " in me a tyrant."

Whoever, under pretence of ſupporting the authority of his ſovereign, would ſtretch it to an arbitrary power, is at the ſame time a bad father, a bad citizen, and a bad ſubject: a bad father and a bad citizen, becauſe he would load his poſterity and his country with the chains of ſlavery; and a bad ſubject, becauſe by changing a lawful for an arbitrary authority, he is ſummoning up ambition and deſpair againſt the king. I call to witneſs, the thrones of the eaſt, ſo often ſtained with the blood of their ſovereigns (e). If the ſultans well underſtood their own intereſt, it would never permit them either to wiſh for ſuch a power, or in this reſpect to yield to the deſires of their viſiers. Kings ought to be deaf to ſuch advice, and to recollect that their higheſt intereſt requires, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, that they ſhould ſet a proper value on their kingdom, in order that it may be enjoyed by them and their poſterity. This true intereſt can only be underſtood by intelligent princes: in others, the contemptible glory they propoſe to themſelves, by commanding abſolutely, and the love of indolence, which conceals from them the dangers with which they are ſurrounded, will always prevent their engaging in more noble purſuits; hence all governments perpetually tend towards deſpotic power.

(b) See Chardin, vol. v.

(c) Critical Hiſt. of Philoſophy, by M. Deſlandes.

(d) Ibid.

(e) Notwithſtanding the attachment of the Chineſe to their ſovereigns, which has often led ſeveral thouſands of them to ſacrifice themſelves on the tomb of their monarchs; yet how many revolutions has the ambition of arbitrary power excited in that empire? See the Hiſtory of the Huns, by M. de Guignet, in the article of China.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

The principal Effects of Deſpotic Power.

I Shall firſt diſtinguiſh deſpotic power into two kinds; one ſuddenly eſtabliſhed by force of arms in a virtuous nation, that bears it patiently. This nation is like an oak bent down by main force, whoſe elaſticity ſoon breaks the ropes which hold it down. Greece furniſhes a multitude of inſtances of this kind.

The other is founded by time, luxury, and effeminacy. The nation among whom it is eſtabliſhed, is like an oak, which being bent down by little and little, inſenſibly loſes the elaſticity, neceſſary to make it riſe and recover its firſt ſtate. Of this laſt kind of deſpotic power, I ſhall treat in this chapter.

In nations ſubject to this kind of government, the men in high poſts can have no clear idea of juſtice; they are in this reſpect plunged into the moſt profound ignorance. Indeed, what idea can a viſier form of juſtice? He does not even know, that there is ſuch a thing as the public welfare: yet deſtitute of this knowlege he muſt wander here and there without a guide. The ideas of juſt and unjuſt, received in early youth, inſenſibly become obſcured, and at length entirely diſappear.

But who, it is objected, can conceal this knowlege from the viſiers? How can they acquire it, I reply, in theſe deſpotic countries, where the citizens have no ſhare in the management of public affairs; where the perſon, who fixes his attention on the misfortunes of his country, meets with the eye of reſentment; where the miſtaken intereſt of the ſultan is oppoſed to the intereſts of his ſubjects; and where, to ſerve the prince, is to betray the nation? In order to be juſt and virtuous, it is neceſſary that they ſhould know what are the duties of a prince and his ſubjects, and ſtudy the reciprocal engagements that bind together all the members of ſociety. Juſtice is no more than a conſummate knowlege of theſe engagements. To riſe to this knowlege, they muſt think; but what man among a people ſubject to arbitrary power, dares to think? Indolence, inutility, inaction, and even the danger of thinking, ſoon draw after them an incapacity of thought; for they think but little in countries, where they keep their thoughts concealed. It would be an idle ſurmiſe, to ſay, that they are ſilent from prudence; but this does not prevent their thinking. It is certain, that they are void of thought, and that great and noble ideas are never formed in the heads of thoſe ſubject to arbitrary power.

In thoſe countries people are never animated by that opinion of their own importance, and that giddineſs which foretels the deſtruction of empires. Every one keeping his eyes fixed on his private intereſt, never places them on that of the public. The people then can have no idea either of the public welfare, or the duty of citizens; and the viſiers being taken from the body of the nation, muſt, on entering their office, be void of every principle that can teach them a

wiſe adminiſtration, or a proper diſtribution of juſtice; the people then muſt ſeek for great places, not with a view of doing good, but to make their court to the ſovereign, in order to obtain a ſhare of his power.

But even ſuppoſing them animated with the deſire of doing good; their ignorance prevents their being able to accompliſh it: and the attention of the viſiers being neceſſarily engroſſed by the intrigues of the ſeraglio, they have not leiſure for reflection.

Beſides, to obtain knowlege, they muſt expoſe themſelves to the fatigue of ſtudy and meditation; and what motive can engage them to take this trouble? They are not ſtimulated to it even by the fear of cenſure (a).

If we may be allowed to compare ſmall things with great, let us take a ſurvey of the republic of letters. If the critics were baniſhed from thence, is it not obvious, that authors, being freed from the ſalutary fear of cenſure, which now compels them to take pains in improving their talents, they would then preſent the public with only rude and imperfect pieces. This is exactly the caſe of viſiers; this is the reaſon of their inattention to the adminiſtration of affairs, and the of their never condeſcending to conſult men of learning (b).

What I have ſaid of the viſiers, may be applied to the ſultans. Princes do not eſcape the general ignorance of their own nation: their eyes are, even in this reſpect, covered with a thicker darkneſs than thoſe of their ſubjects. Almoſt all, who are intruſted with their education, or who ſurround them, being eagerly deſirous of governing under their name, have an intereſt in rendering them ſtupid (c). Thus, the prince deſtined to reign, being ſhut up in the ſeraglio, till the death of his father, paſſes from the harem to the throne, without any clear idea of the knowlege of government, and before he has even been once preſent at a divan.

Wherefore then, after the example of Philip of Macedon, whoſe ſuperior courage and underſtanding did not inſpire with a blind ſelf-confidence, and who paid his pages for repeating to him every day, "Remember, Philip, "that thou art a man;" why ſhould not viſiers ſometimes allow critics to put them in mind of being men (d)? Wherefore, I ſay, cannot they without a crime,

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(a) For this reaſon the Engliſh eſteem the liberty of the preſs one of the moſt valuable of their privileges.

(b) The preſident de Monteſquieu's authority has been quoted in the parliament of England, becauſe the Engliſh are a free people: and in relation to laws and the adminiſtration of affairs, Peter the Great conſulted the famous Leibnitz; becauſe one great man is not aſhamed to conſult another; and becauſe Ruſſia, by is commerce with the other European nations, may obtain more knowledge, than other eaſtern nations.

(c) In a form of government very different from thoſe of the eaſt, even among ourſelves, Louis XIII. in one of his letters complains of the marſhal d'Ancre. "He "oppoſes, ſays he, my walking in the "ſtreets of Paris, and allows me no plea-"ſures, but thoſe of hunting, and taking "a few turns in the Thuilleries: he has "forbid the officers of my houſhold, as "well as all my ſubjects, to converſe with "me on ſerious affairs, and to ſpeak to "me in private." It ſeems as if, in every country, pains are taken to render the princes but little worthy of the throne, where they are called to it by their birth.

(d) There is not a perſon like the duke of Burgundy to be found in the eaſt. That prince read all the libels made againſt him and

a crime, doubt of the juſtice of their deciſions, and repeat after Grotius, "That "every decree or every law, which people are forbid to examine, and to cen- "ſure, can never fail of being unjuſt?"

It is becauſe theſe viſiers are but men. Are there many among the authors, who would have the generoſity to ſpare the critics, had they the power to puniſh them? It is at leaſt only the men of a ſuperior genius, and an elevated character, who, ſacrificing their reſentment to the public advantage, would preſerve in the republic of letters the critics, ſo neceſſary to the progreſs of the arts and ſciences. How then can ſuch generoſity be required from a viſier?

"There are, ſays Balzac, but few miniſters ſo generous as to prefer being "praiſed for their clemency, which laſts as long as the families of thoſe they "have preſerved, to the pleaſure of revenge, tho' the latter paſſes away as ſwiftly "as the fall of the ax that ſeparates the head from the body." Few viſiers deſerve the praiſes given in Sethos to queen Nephta, when the prieſt pronouncing her panegyric, ſays, "ſhe pardoned like the Gods, with the full power of "puniſhing."

Thoſe in power will be always unjuſt and vindictive. M. de Vendome, ſaid pleaſantly enough on this ſubject, that in the march of armies he had often enquired into the quarrels between the mules and the muleteers; but, to the diſgrace of human nature, reaſon was almoſt always on the ſide of the mules.

M. de Vernay, who was ſo well skilled in natural hiſtory, that by the bare inſpection of the tooth of an animal, he knew whether it was carnivorous or fed on graſs, often ſaid, "Let me only ſee the tooth of an unknown animal, "and by that I ſhall judge of its manners." After his example, a moral philoſopher may ſay, ſhew me the degree of power wherewith a man is inveſted, and by that I ſhall form a judgment of his juſtice. In vain ſhould we attempt to diſarm the cruelty of the viſiers, by repeating after Tacitus, that the puniſhment of critics, is only the trumpet that informs poſterity of the diſgrace and vices of their executioners. In deſpotic ſtates, people care, and indeed cannot avoid caring but little for glory and poſterity, ſince they do not love, as I have already obſerved, eſteem for its own ſake, but for the advantages it procures; ſince nothing is granted to merit, and there is nothing which they dare refuſe to power.

The viſiers having then no intereſt in improving their minds, and conſequently in ſupporting cenſure, they muſt generally remain ignorant (e). The lord

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and Louis XIV. He was deſirous of being informed, and was ſenſible that hatred and humour can alone, ſometimes, dare to preſent the truth to kings.

(e) As all the citizens are very ignorant of what conſtitutes the public welfare, moſt of the projectors in thoſe countries are either cheats, who have no particular uſe in view, or people of mean abilities, who cannot ſeize, at a ſingle glance, the long chain by which the ſeveral parts of a ſtate are connected together, and conſequently they always propoſe ſchemes, that are inconſiſtent with the general ſyſtem of government: for this reaſon, they ſeldom dare to expoſe them in their works to public view.

The

lord Bolingbroke ſays on this ſubject, " When young, I at firſt conſidered thoſe " who governed the nations as ſuperior intelligences;" but, he adds, " experi- " ence ſoon undeceived me. I examined thoſe who were at the helm of af- " fairs in England, and ſoon found that the Great were like thoſe gods of " Phœnicia, on whoſe ſhoulders were fixed the head of a bull, as a mark of " ſupreme power; and that, in general, men were governed by the greateſt " blockheads among them." This truth, which Bolingbroke applied, perhaps from humour, to England, is, doubtleſs, not to be diſputed, in almoſt all the empires of the eaſt.

CHAP. XIX.

The abject and ſubmiſſive ſubjection in which the people are kept, occaſions the ignorance of the viſiers: and is the ſecond effect of deſpotic power.

THO' the viſiers, it is objected, may not find it for their intereſt to improve their minds, yet it is moſt certainly for the intereſt of the public, that they ſhould not be ignorant; ſince every nation deſires to be well governed: what then is the reaſon, that no citizen in thoſe countries has the virtue to reproach the viſiers for their ignorance and injuſtice, and to force them by the fear of contempt, to become good citizens? It is becauſe the property of deſpotic power is to debaſe and degrade the mind.

In the ſtates where the law alone diſpenſes puniſhments and rewards, and where obedience is paid to none but the laws, the virtuous, dwelling in ſafety, contract a boldneſs and firmneſs of ſoul, that cannot ſubſiſt in a country which is the ſeat of deſpotic power, where property, life, and liberty depend on the caprice (a) and arbitrary will of one man. In theſe countries it would be as imprudent

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The man of ſenſe and learning perceives, that in theſe governments every change is a new misfortune, becauſe no plan can be followed, and every thing is corrupted by a deſpotic adminiſtration. The only uſeful regulation to be made in theſe governments, is inſenſibly changing their form. From the want of this view, the famous Peter the Great, has perhaps done nothing towards promoting the happineſs of his people. He ought, however, to have foreſeen that one great man is ſeldom ſucceeded by another; and that having made no change in the conſtitution of the empire, the Ruſſians, from the form of their government, would ſoon fall back into that barbarity, from which he had begun to deliver them.

(a) We can find no inſtance in Turky, like that which happened in Scotland, of the laws puniſhing the ſovereign for an act of injuſtice committed againſt a ſubject. At Malcolm's acceſſion to the throne of Scotland, a nobleman preſented to him the patent of his privileges, entreating his majeſty to confirm them: but the king took the patent, and tore it in pieces. The nobleman

prudent to be virtuous, as it would have been to be vicious in Crete and Lacedemon. There no man riſes up againſt injuſtice, and rather than applaud it, cries with the philoſopher Philoxenes, "Let me be carried back to the quarries."

In theſe governments, how difficult would it be to be virtuous? To what dangers would a perſon of probity be expoſed? Suppoſe a man in love with virtue; would we have ſuch a man perceive, that the injuſtice or incapacity of the viſiers or ſatraps, was the cauſe of the miſeries of the public, and yet be ſilent; this would be a contradiction. Beſides, a mute probity would here be of no uſe. The more virtuous this man was, the more eager would he be to point out him, on whom the national contempt ought to fall: and I even maintain, that he ought to do it. Now, the injuſtice and weakneſs of a viſier, inveſted, as I have ſaid above, with the power neceſſary to condemn merit to the greateſt torments, this man would be ſo much the ſooner delivered to the mutes, in proportion to his being more the friend of virtue than of his country.

As Nero, when on the ſtage, extorted the applauſes of the ſpectators, more barbarous than himſelf; ſo the viſiers require the praiſes of even thoſe they uſe ill, and overload with taxes. They are like Tiberius, under whoſe reign the ſighs and cries of the unhappy wretches under oppreſſion, were conſtrued to proceed from a factious ſpirit, becauſe every thing is criminal, ſays Suetonius, under a prince, who is conſtantly ſtung with his own guilt.

There is not a viſier, who would not reduce mankind to the condition of thoſe ancient Perſians, who being cruelly whipped, by the order of their prince, were obliged to appear before him: "We come, ſaid they, to thank thee for having "condeſcended to remember us."

The noble boldneſs of a citizen, ſo virtuous as to reproach the viſiers for their ignorance and injuſtice, would be ſoon followed by his puniſhment (b); to which no body would expoſe themſelves. No body, you will ſay, but the brave man, the hero. He might do it, I reply, when ſupported by the hope of eſteem and glory; but if he is deprived of this hope, his courage abandons him. Among a ſlaviſh people, the name of factious is given to a generous citizen; and there will be found thoſe who approve his puniſhment. There is no crime on which praiſe is not laviſhed, in a ſtate where an abject meanneſs is become the mode. "If the plague, ſays Gordon, had garters, penſions, and "ribbons to beſtow, there are churchmen vile enough, and civilians baſe enough "to maintain, that the plague reigns by divine right; and that to withdraw

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nobleman complained of this to the parliament, who decreed, that the king ſhould ſit on his throne, and in the preſence of the whole court ſtitch the nobleman's patent together with a needle and thread.

(b) When a viſier commits a fault during his adminiſtration, if the public ſuffer by it, the people complain, and the viſier's pride is offended: but ſo far is he from changing his meaſures, and trying by a better conduct to calm their too juſt complaints, that he ſolely employs himſelf in methods of impoſing ſilence on the citizens. Theſe methods of force exaſperate them, and they redouble their cries: the viſier has then only two parts to take, either to expoſe the ſtate to revolutions, or to carry deſpotic power to that exceſs which always threatens the ruin of empires. This laſt choice is moſt commonly preferred by the viſiers.

"ourſelves

" ourſelves from its malignant influences, is a ſin againſt God." It is then more prudent in theſe countries, to be the accomplice, than the accuſer of knaves; for virtue and talents are always the butt of tyranny.

On the conquſt of India, by Thamas Kouli Khan, the only man worthy of eſteem, which that prince found in the Mogul's empire, was one named Mahmouth, and this Mahmouth was baniſhed.

In countries ſubject to a deſpotic government, the love of the eſteem and acclamations of the people is ſo criminal, that the prince always puniſhes thoſe who obtain them. Agricola, after having triumphed over the Britons, in order to eſcape the applauſes of the people, as well as the fury of Domitian, paſſed the ſtreets of Rome in the night, in his way to the emperor's palace: the prince embraced him coldly: Agricola retired; and the conqueror of Briton, ſays Tacitus, was inſtantly loſt in the crowd of other ſlaves.

In thoſe unhappy times, one might have cried out at Rome, with Brutus, " O virtue, thou art but an empty name!" How can we expect to find it amongſt a people, who live in perpetual agonies, and whoſe minds, being broke with fear, have loſt all their force and vigour? Among ſuch people, we only meet with powerful inſolence, and abject, daſtardly ſlaves. What picture can be more humbling to human nature, than the audience of a viſier, when with a grave and ſtupid air of importance, he advances into the midſt of a crowd of clients, who, grave, mute, and immovable, with their eyes fixed and caſt down, wait trembling for the favour of a look (c), nearly in the attitude of thoſe bramins, who, with their eyes fixed on the end of their noſes, wait for the blue and divine flame, with which heaven is to beſtow its illuminations, and whoſe appearance, according to them, is to raiſe them to the dignity of a pagod.

When we ſee merit thus humbled before an ignorant viſier, or even a deſpicable eunuch, we cannot help calling to mind, the ridiculous veneration in which cranes are held at Japan, where the name of that bird is never uttered, without its being preceeded by O-thuriſama, or, my lord.

CHAP. XX.

The contempt of Virtue, and the falſe eſteem people affect to have for it, the third effect of deſpotic Power.

SINCE, as I have already proved in the preceding chapters, the ignorance of the viſiers is a neceſſary conſequence of deſpotic forms of government; the ridicule, which in thoſe countries is caſt on virtue, ſeems equally to proceed from the ſame effect.

(c) The viſier himſelf never enters the divan, when the ſultan is there, without trembling.

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Is it to be doubted, that in the ſumptuous repaſts of the ancient Perſians, and in their elegant evening entertainments, they ridiculed the frugality and coarſe food of the Spartans? And that the courtiers, accuſtomed to cringe in the anti-chamber of the eunuchs, in order to obtain the diſgraceful honour of being their ſport, did not give the name of ferocity to the noble pride which forbad the Greeks proſtrating themſelves before the great king.

A ſlaviſh people cannot avoid treating with ridicule bravery, magnanimity, diſintereſtedneſs, a contempt of life, and all the virtues founded on patriotiſm and liberty. In Perſia, they muſt then have treated as a fool, and the enemy of a prince, every virtuous ſubject, who, ſtruck with the heroiſm of the Greeks, exhorted his fellow citizens to aſſemble, and, by a ſpeedy reformation of the government, prevent the approaching ruin of an empire, where virtue was deſpiſed (a). The Perſians, to eſcape the mortification of thinking themſelves mean, were under the neceſſity of conſidering the Greeks as ridiculous. We can never be ſtruck by any ſentiments that do not effect us in a lively manner. A brave citizen, who is had in veneration, wherever the rank of a citizen ſubſiſts, muſt ever paſs for a fool in all deſpotic governments.

Among us Europeans, who approach nearer to the heroiſm of the Greeks, than to the ſervility of the eaſtern empires, how many great actions would be deemed fooliſh, were they not conſecrated by the admiration of all ages! To this admiration is to be aſcribed our not mentioning as ridiculous, the order ſent by the people of Sparta to king Agis, before the battle of Mantinea: "Take no advantage of ſuperiority of numbers: ſend back a part of the "troops, and fight the enemy with equal force." In like manner we ſhould treat as ridiculous the anſwer made by Callicratidas, general of the Lacedemonian fleet, before the battle of Argineuſes. Hermon adviſing him not to engage the Athenian fleet with unequal force, "O Hermon, he replied, the "Gods forbid, that I ſhould follow an advice, that would be attended with "ſuch fatal conſequences to my country. Sparta ſhall not be diſhonoured by "her general. Here both I and my army muſt either conquer or periſh. Is it "for Callicratidas to teach the art of making a retreat, to men, who, to this "day, have never enquired what were the numbers of the enemy, but only "where they were encamped?" So bold and noble an anſwer would to moſt men appear fooliſh. What men have ſuch an elevation of ſoul, ſuch a profound knowlege of politics, as to perceive, like Callicratidas, the importance of cheriſhing in the Spartans, that obſtinate bravery that rendered them invincible? This hero knew, that to be inceſſantly employed in cheriſhing their ſentiments of courage and glory, too much prudence might blunt their edge; and that a nation can have none of the virtues, without having the ſcruples that attend them.

Half politicians, for want of comprehending a ſufficient extent of time, are always ſtruck in too lively a manner with a preſent danger. Accuſtomed to con-

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(a) At the very moment when three hundred Spartans defended the paſs of Thermopyle, ſome Arcadian deſerters were giving Xerxes an account of the Olympic games, when a Perſian lord cried out, "What men are we going to fight! inſenſible of intereſt, they are only greedy "of glory!"

ſider every action independently of the chain by which they are all united, when they think of correcting the ſucceſs of any virtue that prevails among a people, they too often only take from them the palladium, to which is fixed their ſucceſs and glory.

It is then to this ancient admiration, that we owe our ſtill continuing to admire theſe actions: this admiration is then only hypocritical, or the effect of prejudice. A felt admiration would neceſſarily lead us to imitation.

Now, what man is there, among thoſe who pretend to be paſſionately fond of glory, who would bluſh at a victory, that was not entirely owing to his bravery and military skill? Are there many Antiochus Soters? That prince, ſenſible that he owed the defeat of the Galates, only to the terror and confuſion into which they are thrown, by the unexpected ſight of the elephants, ſhed tears on his triumphal palms, and on the field of battle cauſed trophies to be raiſed to his elephants.

They boaſt of the generoſity of Gelon. After the defeat of the innumerable army of the Carthaginians, when the conquered expected the hardeſt conditions, that prince only required of the humbled Carthaginians, the abolition of the barbarous ſacrifices of their own children, they offered to Saturn. That conqueror would reap no other advantage from his victory, than the concluſion of the only treaty that perhaps was ever made in favour of human nature. Among ſo many admirers, why has Gelon no imitator? A thouſand heroes have by turns ſubdued Aſia: however, there is not one, who, ſenſible of the miſeries ſuffered by the human race, has improved his victory, by freeing the Orientals from that weight of wretchedneſs and degradation, into which they have been ſunk by deſpotic power. None of them have deſtroyed thoſe houſes of grief and lamentation, where jealouſy without remorſe mutilates the unhappy perſons deſtined to guard their pleaſure, and condemned to the puniſhment of having deſires always reviving, and always impotent. People have then no eſteem for Gelon's action, but what is hypocritical, or the effect of prejudice.

We honour valour, but it is leſs than it was honoured at Sparta: therefore, we do not experience, at the view of a fortified town, the ſenſations of contempt felt by the Spartans. Some of them paſſing under the walls of Corinth, asked, "by what "women is this city inhabited?" "Theſe are, they were told, the Corinthians." "Do not theſe mean ſpirited and cowardly men know, they reſumed, that the "only ramparts impenetrable to the enemy, are citizens determined to die?" Such courage and elevation of ſoul are only to be found in warlike republics. With whatever love we are animated for our country, we do not ſee the mother after the loſs of a ſon killed in battle, reproach her other ſons who have ſurvived the defeat. We do not take example from thoſe virtuous Spartans: after the battle of Leuctra, aſhamed of having borne in their wombs, men capable of flying, thoſe whoſe children had eſcaped the ſlaughter, retired to the innermoſt parts of their houſes, in mourning and ſilence; while, on the contrary, the mothers, whoſe ſons died fighting, filled with joy, and with their heads crowned with flowers, went to the temple to return thanks to the Gods.

However brave our ſoldiers may be, we do not ſee a body of twelve hundred men ſuſtain, like the Swiſs at the battle of St. James l'Hoſpital

tal (b), the efforts of an army of ſixty thouſand men, who paid for their victory by the loſs of eight thouſand ſoldiers. We no longer ſee governments treat as cowards, and condemn as ſuch, ten ſoldiers, who, eſcaping from the ſlaughter of that battle, brought home the news of ſo glorious a defeat.

If in Europe itſelf, we have only a barren admiration of ſuch actions and ſuch virtues, what contempt muſt the people of the eaſt feel for the ſame virtues? Who can make theſe think of them with reſpect? Thoſe countries are peopled with abject vicious minds; and when the virtuous men in a country are not ſufficiently numerous to give the bent to a nation, it neceſſarily receives it from thoſe who are corrupt. Theſe laſt, always intereſted in ridiculing the ſenſations they do not feel, render the virtuous ſilent. Unhappily, there are but few, who do not yield to the clamours of thoſe by whom they are ſurrounded, who are courageous enough to brave the contempt of their country, and have the judgment to think, that the eſteem of a nation, placed on a certain degree of degradation, is leſs flattering than diſhonourable.

Did the little value ſet on Hannibal, at the court of Antiochus, diſhonour that great man? Did the cowardice, with which Pruſias would have ſold him to the Romans, ſtain the glory of that illuſtrious Carthaginian? In the eyes of poſterity, it has only diſhonoured the king, the council, and the people, who deliberated upon it.

The reſult of what I have ſaid is, that people have really in deſpotic empires, only a contempt for virtue, and that nothing but the name is honoured. If, every day we invoke this virtue, and require it of the citizens, it is only, in this caſe, with virtue as with truth, it is demanded on condition we are ſo prudent as to conceal it.

CHAP. XXI.

Of the Deſtruction of Empires ſubject to Arbitrary Power: the fourth effect of tyranny.

THE indifference of the eaſtern nations, with reſpect to virtue, their ignorance and abject ſtate of mind, neceſſarily follow from the form of their government, and muſt at the ſame time, render citizens diſhoneſt to each other, and void of courage, with reſpect to an enemy.

(b) M. Duclos, in the hiſtory of Louis XI. ſays, that the Swiſs, to the number of three thouſand, ſuſtained the ſhock of the Dauphin's army, compoſed of fourteen thouſand French and eight thouſand Engliſh. The battle was fought near Bottelin, and the Swiſs were almoſt all ſlain.

At the battle of Morgarten, thirteen hundred Swiſs routed the archduke Leopold's army, compoſed of twenty thouſand men. Near the Weſen, in the canton of Glaris, three hundred and fifty Swiſs defeated eight thouſand Auſtrians: every year they celebrate the memory of this defeat, on the field of battle; when an orator makes a panegyric on this action, and reads the liſt of the three hundred and fifty names.

From this ſource we may trace the aſtoniſhing rapidity, with which the Greeks and Romans ſubdued Aſia. How could ſlaves, educated and nurtured in the anti-chamber of a maſter, ſtifle, at the ſight of the Roman ſwords, the habitual ſenſations of fear they had contracted from arbitrary power? How could men, ſo debaſed, without elevation of mind, accuſtomed to trample on the weak, and to cringe before the powerful, avoid yielding to the magnanimity, the policy, the valour of the Romans, and ſhew themſelves equally daſtardly in counſel, and in the field of battle?

If the Egyptians, as Plutarch ſays, were ſucceſſively the ſlaves of all nations, it was owing to their being ſubject to the moſt ſevere deſpotic power: thus, they almoſt conſtantly gave proofs of cowardice. When king Cleomenes, being driven from Sparta, took refuge in Egypt, he was impriſoned by the intrigues of a miniſter, named Sobiſius; but having killed his guard, and broken his fetters, the prince preſented himſelf in the ſtreets of Alexandria; but in vain did he exhort the citizens to revenge him, to puniſh the injuſtice of his treatment, and ſhake off the yoke of tyranny: every where, ſays Plutarch, he found only immoveable admirers. Theſe baſe and cowardly people had only that ſpecies of courage which made them admire great actions, but not that which would excite them to imitate them.

How can a ſlaviſh people reſiſt a free and powerful nation? In order to make uſe of arbitrary power with impunity, the tyrant is forced to enervate the minds and the courage of his ſubjects. What renders him formidable at home, renders him weak abroad: with liberty, he baniſhes from his empire, all the virtues; they cannot, ſays Ariſtotle, inhabit baſe and ſervile minds. "We muſt "(ſays the illuſtrious preſident de Monteſquieu, whom we have already quoted) "begin by being bad citizens, in order to become good ſlaves." They could only oppoſe againſt the attacks of a people like the Romans, councils and generals, abſolutely unacquainted with political and military knowlege, taken from that very nation, whoſe courage was ſoftened, and whoſe minds were debilitated; it then neceſſarily followed, that they muſt have been overcome.

But, it is ſaid, the virtuous, have however ſhone with the greateſt luſtre in deſpotic ſtates. This is true, when it has happened, that the throne has been ſucceſſively poſſeſſed by ſeveral great men. Virtue benumbed by the preſence of tyranny, revives at the appearance of a virtuous prince: His preſence may be compared to that of the ſun; when his light pierces and diſperſes the black clouds that cover the earth, all nature revives, every thing glows with new life; the plains are peopled with laborious huſbandmen, the groves reſound with aerial concerts, and the winged inhabitants of the skies fly to the tops of the oaks, to welcome the returning ſun. "O happy times (cries Tacitus, under the "reign of Trajan) when people obey only the laws, when every one may "think freely, and freely tell his thoughts, when every heart flies to the prince, "and the ſight of him is a benefit!"

The luſtre thrown upon ſuch nations, is always but of ſhort duration. If ſometimes they attain to the higheſt pitch of power and glory, and become illuſtrious by ſucceſs of all kinds, this ſucceſs being united, as I have already ſaid, with the wiſdom of the kings who governed, and not with the form of government, has always been as fleeting as brilliant: the ſtrength of ſuch ſtates, however it may impoſe upon us, is but an illuſion: it is the coloſſus of Nebuchadnezzar,

chadnezzar, whoſe feet were of potter's clay. Theſe empires reſemble the lofty pine, whoſe top reaches to the heavens, the beaſts of the field, and the birds of the air ſeek for ſhelter under its branches; but, being fixed to the earth by too weak a root, is overthrown by the firſt ſtorm. Such ſtates have but a momentary exiſtence, if they are not ſurrounded by nations, who have little diſpoſitions for great enterprizes, and are ſubject to arbitrary power. The reſpective ſtrength of ſuch nations conſiſts then in an equilibrium of weakneſs. If a deſpotic empire has received a ſhock, and the throne cannot be ſecured without a manly and courageous reſolution, that empire is deſtroyed.

The people who groan beneath the yoke of arbitrary power, have then only a momentary ſucceſs, a mere flaſh of glory; and muſt, ſooner or later, ſubmit to a free and enterpriſing nation. But ſuppoſing that particular circumſtances and ſituations ſave them from this danger; the bad adminiſtration of theſe kingdoms is ſufficient to deſtroy, to depopulate, and to turn them into deſarts; the lethargic languor that ſucceſſively ſeizes all the members, produces this effect. The property of deſpotic power is to ſtifle the paſſions: now when minds have, by the want of paſſions, loſt their activity; when the citizens are in a manner rendered ſtupid by the opium of luxury, indolence and ſoftneſs, the ſtate then falls into a conſumption: the apparent calm it enjoys, is, in the eyes of men of underſtanding, a languid ſtate that is the forerunner of its diſſolution. The paſſions are neceſſary in a nation, and are its life and ſoul; the people who have the ſtrongeſt, are in the end triumphant.

The moderate effervescence of the paſſions is ſalutary to an empire; which in this reſpect reſemble the ſea, whoſe ſtagnate waters on becoming corrupt, would exhale vapours that would prove fatal to the univerſe, if they were not purified by the riſing of tempeſts.

But, if the grandeur of nations ſubject to arbitrary power is only momentaneous, it is not ſo in goverments where the power, as in Rome and Greece, is divided between the people, the nobility, or the kings. In thoſe ſtates, private intereſt, cloſely connected with that of the public, changes men into citizens. It is in ſuch ſtates only that the people, whoſe ſucceſs depends on the conſtitution of the government, may hope that it will be of long duration. The neceſſity in which the citizens here find themſelves, of being employed about important objects, and the liberty of thinking and ſpeaking whatever they pleaſe, give greater ſtrength and elevation of mind; the boldneſs of their thoughts have an influence on their hearts, and make them conceive more extenſive, more courageous projects, and execute them with greater intrepidity. I ſhall even add, that if private intereſt is not intirely ſeperated from that of the public, if the manners of a people, like thoſe of the Romans, are not as corrupt as they were in the time of Marius and Sylla; the ſpirit of faction, which obliges the citizens to watch, and be a mutual reſtraint on each other, is the preſerving genius of theſe empires. They are maintained only by a counterbalance of oppoſite intereſts. Never are the foundations of theſe ſtates more ſecure, than at the time when theſe exterior ferments appear ready to overthrow them. Thus, the bottom of the ſea is calm and tranquil, even when the north winds, let looſe on its ſurface, ſeems to turn it up from its abyſs.

After

After having diſcovered in the deſpotic power of the eaſtern nations, the cauſe of the ignorance of the viſiers, the indifference of the people with reſpect to virtue, and the overthrow of empires ſubject to that form of governments, I ſhall now proceed, to ſhew the oppoſite effects produced from other political conſtitutions.

CHAP. XXII.

Of the love of certain Nations for Glory and Virtue.

THIS chapter is ſo neceſſary a conſequence of the preceding, that I ſhould think myſelf excuſed from all farther examination of this ſubject, were I not convinced, that an explanation of the means proper to neceſſitate men to virtue, would be agreeable to the public, and that ſuch diſquiſitions are inſtructive even to thoſe who are moſt virtuous. I therefore enter into this ſubject. I caſt my eyes over the republics more fruitful in virtuous men: I ſtop them at Greece and Rome, and ſee a multitude of heroes ariſe. Their great actions, preſerved with care in hiſtory, ſeem collected there, to ſpread the odour of virtue into the moſt corrupt and diſtant ages: it is with theſe actions as with the vaſes of incenſe, which, placed on the altars of the Gods, are ſufficient to diffuſe their perfume over the vaſt extent of their temples.

Whoever conſiders the virtuous actions hiſtory has tranſmitted of theſe people, and would diſcover the cauſe, they will find that it proceeded from the addreſs with which the legiſlators of thoſe nations united private and public intereſt (a).

I take the action of Regulus for a proof of this truth. Suppoſing in this general, no ſentiment of heroiſm, not even thoſe with which he muſt have been inſpired by a Roman education; I maintain, that in the age when that conſul lived, the legiſlation was, in certain reſpects, brought to ſuch a degree of perfection, that had Regulus conſulted merely his own perſonal intereſt, he could not avoid the generous action he performed. For whoever calls to mind the diſcipline of the Romans, and that flight, and even the loſs of their buckler in battle was puniſhed with the baſtinado, under which the guilty commonly expired, muſt be convinced that a conſul conquered, made priſoner, and deputed by the Carthaginians to treat about the exchange of priſoners, could not appear before the Romans, without the fear of that contempt, which is always ſo humbling to republicans, and ſo inſupportable to an elevated mind. Hence the only part Regulus had to take, was to efface, by ſome heroic action, the ſhame of his defeat. He therefore oppoſed the treaty of exchange, which the ſenate was ready to ſign. He doubtleſs expoſed his life by this advice: but the danger was not imminent; it was very probable, that, aſtoniſhed by his courage,

(a) In this union conſiſts the true ſpirit of the laws.

the

the ſenate would be only the more eager for concluding a treaty, that would reſtore to them ſo virtuous a citizen. Beſides, ſuppoſing the ſenate was brought over by his advice, it was very probable, that the Carthaginians, from the fear of repriſals, or an admiration of his virtue, would not make him ſuffer the puniſhment, with which they had threatened him. Regulus did not then expoſe himſelf to any danger, to which, I will not ſay an hero, but even a ſenſible and prudent man would have preſented himſelf, to avoid the contempt, and obtain the admiration of the Romans.

There is then an art of neceſſitating men to perform heroic actions; not that I would pretend to inſinuate here, that Regulus did nothing more than obey this neceſſity, nor do I mean to ſtain his glory; the action performed by Regulus, was doubtleſs the effect of an impetuous enthuſiaſm, which led to virtue; but ſuch an enthuſiaſm could no where be kindled but at Rome.

The virtues and vices of a nation are always neceſſary effects of its legiſlation; and it was doubtleſs the knowlege of this truth, that made way for that excellent law in China; to fertilize the ſeeds of virtue, the mandarins participate in the glory or ſhame of the virtuous or infamous actions committed in their governments (b); and in conſequence of them, thoſe mandarins are raiſed to ſuperior, or degraded to inferior poſts.

How can it be doubted, that virtue is not among all nations the effect of the greater or leſs degree of wiſdom in the adminiſtration? If the Greeks and Romans were ſo long animated by theſe manly and courageous virtues, which Balzac calls "the excurſions of the ſoul beyond the common duties," it is becauſe the virtues of this king are almoſt conſtantly peculiar to the nations, where each citizen has a part in the ſovereignty.

It is only in theſe countries that we find a Fabricius. Being preſſed by Pyrrhus to follow him to Epirus: "Pyrrhus, ſaid he, thou art doubtleſs an illuſ-
"trious prince, and a great warrior; but thy people groan in miſery. What
"raſhneſs would it be to take me into Epirus? Canſt thou doubt that thy
"people, ſoon ranged under my law, would not prefer exemption from tribute,
"to being overloaded with taxes, and ſecurity to the uncertainty of their poſ-
"ſeſſions? To-day thy favourite, to-morrow I ſhould be thy maſter." Such a diſcourſe could only be pronounced by a Roman. In republics we perceive with aſtoniſhment, how far the heighth of courage, and the heroiſm of nations may be carried (c.) I ſhall mention Themiſtocles for an example of this kind: a few

(b) This is not the caſe in the other empires of the eaſt, where the governors are only employed in levying taxes, and oppoſing ſeditions. Beſides, they are not required to trouble themſelves about the happineſs of the people in their provinces; their power in this reſpect is even very limited.

(c) We ſee from cardinal Mazarine's letters, that he was ſenſible of the advantages of this form of government. He was afraid that England, by forming a republic, would become too formidable to its neighbours. In a letter to M. le Tellier, he ſays, "Dom Louis and I know very well,
"that Charles II. is out of the kingdoms
"that belong to him; but among all the
"reaſons that may engage the kings our
"maſters, to think of his reſtoration, one
"of the ſtrongeſt is, hindering England
"from

a few days before the battle of Salamis, that warrior, inſulted in full council by the Spartan general, made no other reply to his menaces than theſe words, "Strike, but hear." To this example I ſhall add, that of Timoleon: he was accuſed of a miſdemeanor, and the people were ready to cut his accuſers in pieces; but he ſtopped their fury by ſaying, "O Syracuſans, what are you a "going to do? Think that every citizen has a right to accuſe me: Take care, "leſt by giving way to your gratitude, ye do not injure that very liberty, "which it is my glory to have reſtored to you."

If the Greek and Roman hiſtory is full of theſe heroic ſtrokes, and if we in vain ſearch the whole hiſtory of deſpotic power to find the like; it is only becauſe, in theſe governments, private intereſt is never united to that of the public; becauſe, in theſe countries, among a thouſand qualities, they do honour only to baſeneſs, and reward none but thoſe of moderate abilities (d); and becauſe, to theſe men of moderate abilities, the adminiſtration of public affairs is almoſt always intruſted; while men of genius are excluded. They are of opinion, that theſe being reſtleſs and too active, they would diſturb the repoſe of the ſtate; a repoſe that may be compared to the momentary ſtillneſs of nature preceding a tempeſt. The tranquility of a ſtate does not always prove the happineſs of the ſubject. In arbitrary governments, the men are like thoſe horſes, whoſe noſes being wrung, ſuffer, without flinching, the moſt cruel operations, while the courſer at liberty prances at the firſt touch. In theſe countries, a lethargy is taken for tranquility. The love of glory, unknown to theſe nations, can only be preſerved in a body politic, by the mild fermentation that renders it ſound and robuſt, and calls forth every virtue and every talent. The ages moſt favourable to literature have, for this reaſon, always been moſt fruitful in great generals and great politicians: the ſame ſun gives life to the cedar and the plane-tree.

Moreover, this paſſion for glory, which was deified by the pagans, has received the homage of all republics, but principally of thoſe that are poor and warlike.

CHAP. XXIII.

That poor Nations have been always more greedy of Glory, and more fruitful in virtuous Men, than opulent Nations.

THE heroes in commercial republics, ſeem to appear only to deſtroy tyranny, and then to vaniſh. It was in the infancy of the liberty of the Dutch, that Balzac, ſpeaking of that nation, ſaid, "that they deſerved to have

"from forming a powerful republic, which, "in the end, would give all its neighbours "cauſe to look about them."

(d) In theſe countries genius and abilities are only honoured in great princes, and great miniſters.

"God

" God for their king, ſince they could not bear to have a king for their " God." The ſoil proper for the production of great men in republics, is then ſoon exhauſted. The glory of Carthage diſappeared with Hannibal. The ſpirit of commerce there, neceſſarily deſtroyed that of valour. " Rich nations, " ſays Balzac, are governed by the force of lucrative reaſons, and not according " to moral inſtitutions, which propoſe motives to great and honeſt enterprizes."

A virtuous courage is only preſerved among poor nations. The Scythians were, perhaps, the only people who ſung hymns in honour of the gods, without asking any favours, from their being perſuaded that the courageous could want for nothing. Subject to commanders, whoſe power was ſufficiently extenſive, they were independant, becauſe they ceaſed to obey their chiefs, when they ceaſed to obey the laws. There are no rich nations who reſemble the Scythians, in having no other want but that of glory. Wherever commerce flouriſhes, riches are preferred to glory, becauſe riches afford an exchange for all pleaſures, and it is more eaſy to acquire them.

What a ſterility of virtues and talents muſt this preference occaſion? The decrees of glory never proceding, but from public gratitude, its acquiſition is always the reward of ſervices rendered to our country; and the deſire of obtaining it, conſtantly ſuppoſes the deſire of performing ſervices, that may be of uſe to the nation.

This is not the caſe with the deſire of riches. They may ſometimes be the reward of ſtockjobbers, of meanneſs, of ſpies, and very often of crimes; they ſeldom fall to the ſhare of thoſe, who have the greateſt abilities, or of thoſe who are moſt diſtinguiſhed by their virtues. The love of riches does not neceſſarily lead to the love of virtue. Commercial nations ought therefore to be more fruitful in good merchants, than in good citizens, and in great bankers, than in heroes.

It is not then in the land of luxury and of riches, but in that of poverty, that the ſublime virtues grow and flouriſh (a); nothing is ſo uncommon, as to meet with great minds in opulent empires (b); the citizens there contract too many wants. Whoever has multiplied them, has given tyranny hoſtages, for his baſeneſs and cowardice. Virtue, with which few are ſatisfied, can alone ſecure the people from corruption. It was this kind of virtue that dictated the anſwer of an Engliſh lord, diſtinguiſhed by his merit, to a miniſter. The court finding it for their intereſt, to bring him over to their party, Mr. Walpole waited upon him: I come from the king, ſaid he, to aſſure you of his protection; to let you know, that he is ſorry for his not yet having done any thing thing for you; and to offer you a poſt more ſuitable to your merit. Sir, replied the nobleman, before I anſwer your propoſal, permit me to have my ſupper ſerved up. Immediately was brought in the remains of a leg of mutton, on which he had dined; then, turning to Mr. Walpole, Sir, ſaid he, do you think that a man,

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(a) To which I add happineſs. What it is impoſſible to ſay of individuals, may be ſaid of nations; that the moſt virtuous are always the moſt happy; though they are not the moſt rich and commercial.

(b) Among all the nations of Germany, the Sucones, ſays Tacitus, after the example of the Romans, ſet a value on riches, and like them have ſubmitted to deſpotic power.

who can be contented with ſuch fare, can be eaſily gained over? Tell his majeſty, what you have ſeen, this is the only anſwer I have to make *.

Such a diſcourſe could only proceed from a perſon, who knew how to contract the circle of his wants: but how few perſons in a rich country, can reſiſt the perpetual temptation of ſuperfluities? What virtuous men does poverty give to a nation, whom luxury would have corrupted? "O philoſophers, "Socrates often ſaid, you who repreſent the gods on earth, learn like them to "be ſelf-ſufficient, and to be contented with little; eſpecially, go not cringing "to ſolicite princes and kings." "Nothing can be more firm and virtuous, "ſays Cicero, than the firſt ages of Greece; they were terrified at no dan-"ger, they were diſcouraged at no obſtacles, and no reſpect reſtrained them, "or made them ſacrifice the truth to the abſolute will of princes." But theſe philoſophers were born in poor countries; therefore, their ſucceſſors did always preſerve the ſame virtues. Thoſe of Alexandria, were reproached with having too much complaiſance for the princes their benefactors, and with purchaſing, by their meanneſs, the tranquil leiſure thoſe princes ſuffered them to enjoy. On this ſubject, Plutarch cries out, "What ſight can be more degrading to hu-"man nature, than to ſee ſages proſtitute their praiſes to men in place! Muſt "the courts of kings be ſo often the rocks on which wiſdom and virtue ſplit? "Ought not the great to be ſenſible, that all who entertain them, with things "of only a frivilous nature, deceive them (c)? The true manner of ſerving "them, is to reprove them for their vices and bad conduct, and to let them "know, that it ill becomes them, to ſpend their days in diverſion. This is "the only language proper to a virtuous man; lying and flattery ſhould never "dwell upon his lip."

This exclamation of Plutarch is very fine; but it is a greater proof of his love of truth, than of his knowlege of human nature. It is the ſame with reſpect to Pythagoras: "I refuſe, ſays he, the name of philoſophers to thoſe "who give into the corruption of courts: thoſe alone are worthy the name, "who are ready to ſacrifice before kings, their life, their riches, their dignities, "their families, and even their reputation. By this love of truth, he adds, we "participate with the divinity, and become united to him in the moſt noble and "intimate manner."

Such men do not indifferently ariſe in all kinds of governments: they are produced, either by a philoſophical enthuſiaſm, that is ſpeedily extinguiſhed, by a ſingular education, or by an excellent legiſlation. The philoſophers mentioned by Plutarch and Pythagoras, have almoſt conſtantly been born in poor nations paſſionately fond of glory.

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* This ſtory I find related of a member of parliament, in the reign of Charles II. in the General Dictionary.

(c) There was doubtleſs a time, when men, diſtinguiſhed by their wiſdom, had a right to ſpeak only to princes, in order to tell them what was truly uſeful. Hence, the philoſophers of India left their retreat but once in a year. This was to repair to the king's palace, where each of them uttered, with a loud voice, his political reflections on the adminiſtration, and the changes and regulations they would have made in the laws. Thoſe whoſe reflections were for three times ſucceſſively judged falſe or trivial, loſt their right of ſpeaking. Crit. Hiſt. of Philoſophy, tom. II.

Not

Not that I regard indigence as the ſource of virtues: it is to the greater or leſs wiſdom in the adminiſtration of honours and rewards, that we muſt attribute the production of great men among all nations. But what can ſcarcely be imagined is, that virtue and abilities are no where to be recompenſed in ſo flattering a manner, as in poor and warlike republics.

CHAP. XXIV.

Proof of this Truth.

TO take from this propoſition the air of a paradox, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that the two moſt general objects of the deſires of mankind, are wealth and honours. But of theſe two objects, men are moſt deſirous of honours, they are diſpenſed in a manner flattering to ſelf-love.

The deſire therefore of obtaining them, renders men capable of the greateſt efforts, and it is then that they perform prodigies. Now theſe honours are no where diſtributed with more juſtice than among the people, who, having no other money to pay for the ſervices rendered to their country, have conſequently the greateſt intereſt in ſupporting their value: thus, the poor republics of Greece and Rome have produced more great men, than all the vaſt and rich empires of the eaſt.

Among the nations oppulent and ſubject to deſpotic power, people place, and ought to place, more value on money, than on honours. As honours received their value from the manner in which they are adminiſtered, and as in the eaſt, the ſultans are diſpenſers of them, it appears, that they muſt bring them into diſcredit, by the ill choice they make of thoſe whom they adorn with them. Thus in thoſe countries, honours are properly mere titles only: they cannot flatter pride in a very lively manner, becauſe they are ſeldom united with glory, which is not in the power of princes, but in that of the people only to beſtow; ſince glory is nothing more than the acclamation of public gratitude. Now when honours are debaſed, the deſire of obtaining them grows cool, and this deſire no longer enables men to perform great things; they become in a ſtate a ſpring without force, and therefore placemen juſtly neglect to make uſe of them.

There is a diſtrict in America, where, when an Indian has gained a victory, or managed a negotiation with dexterity, they ſay to him in an aſſembly of the nation, "Thou art a man." This elogium is a more powerful incentive to great actions, than all the dignities propoſed by deſpotic ſtates, to thoſe who render themſelves illuſtrious by their talents.

In order to be fully ſenſible of the contempt, which muſt be ſometimes thrown on honours, from the ridiculous manner in which they are beſtowed, let us remember the abuſe that was made of them, in the reign of Claudius: under that emperor, ſays Pliny, a citizen killed a raven remarkable for his dexterity: this citizen was put to death, and a magnificent funeral was made for the bird; a muſician playing on a flute, preceded the bed of ſtate, on which

the raven lay, which was ſupported by two ſlaves, and in the proceſſion followed an infinite number of people of both ſexes, and of all ages. Upon this ſubject, Pliny cries out, "What would our anceſtors ſay, if in Rome itſelf, "where our firſt kings were intered without pomp, where they did not revenge "the death of the deſtroyer of Carthage and Numantia, they had aſſiſted at "the obſequies of a raven!"

But, you will ſay, in countries ſubject to arbitrary power, honours are however ſometimes the reward of merit. They doubtleſs are ſo: but they are oftner the reward of vice and meanneſs. Honours are in theſe governments like the ſcattered trees in a deſart, whoſe fruits are ſometimes carried off by the birds of heaven, but become too often the prey of the ſerpent, which from the foot of the tree aſcends even to its top.

Honours being once degraded, ſervices performed for the ſtate can only be paid for with money. Now every nation, who diſcharges its obligations only with ſpecie, ſoon becomes overcharged with expences, and in a little time inſolvent; there is then no reward for virtue and abilities.

In vain, is it ſaid, that inſtructed by want, princes in this extremity, ought to have recourſe to the payment of their obligations with honours: for as in poor republics, where favours are diſtributed by the body of the nation, it is eaſy to raiſe the value of honours, nothing can be more difficult than to render them valuable in deſpotic countries.

What probity would that adminiſtration ſhew, that ſhould endeavour to reward with honours? What ſtrength of mind would it require to reſiſt the intrigues of courtiers? What diſcernment, to grant theſe honours only to perſons of great talents, and diſtinguiſhed virtues, and conſtantly to refuſe them to thoſe of mean abilities, who would diſcredit them? What juſtneſs of thought would it demand, to ſeize the preciſe moment, when theſe honours, by becoming too common, would no longer excite the citizens to make the ſame efforts, and when they ought conſequently to create new ones?

It is not the ſame with honours as with riches. If the public intereſt forbids the melting down the gold and ſilver ſpecie, it on the contrary requires, that honours ſhould not be beſtowed as a reward, when they have loſt the value which they only receive from the opinion of the people.

I ſhall obſerve on this ſubject, that we cannot without aſtoniſhment conſider the conduct of moſt nations, who employ ſo many men in the management of their revenues, and appoint none to watch over the diſtribution of honours. Yet what can be of greater uſe, than a ſevere ſcrutiny into the merit of thoſe, whom they raiſe to dignities? Why has not each nation a court, in which, by a profound and ſtrict examination, they may aſcertain the reality of thoſe talents that are to be rewarded? What a value would ſuch an examination give to honours? What a deſire to merit them? What a happy change would this deſire produce, not only in private education, but by little and little, in that of the public? A change, on which, perhaps, depends all the difference obſervable between nations.

Among the baſe and cowardly courtiers of Antiochus, how many would there have been, had they been educated from their infancy at Rome, who would, like Popilius, have drawn a circle about that king, beyond which he could not paſs, without rendering himſelf a ſlave, or the enemy of the Romans?

Having

Having proved that great rewards produce great virtues, and that the wiſe diſtribution of honours is the ſtrongeſt band, which legiſlators can uſe to unite the private and general intereſt, and to form good citizens; I think I have a right to conclude from thence, that the love or indifference of certain nations for virtue, is an effect of the different forms of their governments. Now, what I have ſaid of the love of virtue, which I take for an example, may be applied to any other of the paſſions. We ought not then to attribute to nature, that unequal degree of paſſions, of which different nations appear ſuſceptible.

As the laſt proof of this truth, I am going to ſhew, that the ſtrength of our paſſions is always proportioned to the force of the means employed to excite them.

CHAP. XXV.

Of the exact Relation between the Strength of the Paſſions, and the Greatneſs of the Rewards propoſed to Mankind.

IN order to be ſenſible of this connection, it is neceſſary to have recourſe to hiſtory. I open that of Mexico: I ſee heaps of gold affording the avarice of the Spaniards greater riches, than they could have procured by the plunder of all Europe. Animated by the deſire of poſſeſſing them, theſe very Spaniards quit their ſubſtance and their families, and, under the conduct of Cortez, undertake the conqueſt of the new world; combat at once the climate, want, numbers, and, valour; and by a courage as obſtinate as impetuous, triumph over them all.

More heated ſtill by the luſt of gold, and more greedy of riches, as they were more indigent, I ſee the Bucaniers, paſs from the northern to the ſouthern ſeas; attack impenetrable intrenchments; defeat, with a handful of men, numerous bodies of diſciplined ſoldiers, and often, having ravaged the coaſts of the Pacific Ocean, open to themſelves a new paſſage into the northern ſeas, by ſurmounting, with incredible fatigue, continual combats, and a courage that was proof againſt every thing, all the obſtacles which men and nature threw in their way.

If I caſt my eyes on the hiſtory of the north, the firſt people who preſent themſelves to my view, are the diſciples of Odin. They are animated with the proſpect of a reward, which, though imaginary, is the greateſt of all, when realiſed by credulity. Thus, while they are actuated by a lively hope, they ſhew a courage, which being proportioned to a celeſtial recompence, is even ſuperior to that of the Bucaniers. "Our warriors, greedy of death, ſays one of their "poets, ſeek for it with fury; being ſtruck in battle by a mortal blow, they fall, "and laughing die." This truth is confirmed by one of their kings, named Lodbrog, when, crying out in the field of battle, "With what unknown joy am "I ſeized? I die: I hear the voice of Odin call me; already the gates of his "palace are opened; I ſee coming from thence, beautiful virgins half naked;

"they

" they wear a blue ſcarf, which augments the whiteneſs of their boſoms, they ad-
" vance towards me, and offer me the moſt delicious beer, in the bleeding
" skulls of my enemies."

If from the north I paſs to the ſouth, I ſee Mahomet, the creator of a new religion like that of Odin, call himſelf the envoy of Heaven, proclaim to the Saracins, that the Moſt High had delivered to them the earth, that he would make terror and deſolation march before them; but that they muſt merit the empire by their valour. To excite their courage, he teaches, that the Eternal has thrown a bridge over the abyſs of hell, narrower than the edge of a ſcymeter; and that after the reſurrection, the brave will skip over it with a light foot, in order to arrive at the celeſtial abodes; while the coward falling from this bridge, will be precipitated into the jaws of the horrible ſerpent, that inhabits the dark cavern of the houſe of ſmoke.

To confirm the miſſion of the prophet, his diſciples add, that mounted on Al-borak, he paſſed through the ſeven heavens, ſaw the angel of death, and the white cock, which, with his feet fixed on the firſt heaven, concealed his head in the ſeventh: that Mahomet cut the moon in two; made fountains iſſue from his fingers; gave ſpeech to the brutes; cauſed himſelf to be followed by the foreſts, and ſaluted by the mountains (a); and that, beloved of God, he brought the law, dictated to him by the Almighty.

Struck by theſe recitals, the Saracins liſtened to the diſcourſe of Mahomet with the more credulity, as he gave them the moſt voluptuous deſcriptions of the celeſtial abodes, deſigned for the brave. Intereſted by the pleaſures of ſenſe to be enjoyed in paradiſe, I ſee them glowing with the warmeſt zeal, and ſighing inceſſantly after the Houris, ruſh with fury upon their enemies. " Warriors,
" cried in battle one of their generals named Ikrimach, I ſee thoſe beautiful
" virgins with black eyes: they are foreſcore in number. If one of them
" ſhould make her appearance on earth, all its ſovereigns would quit their
" thrones to follow her. But what do I ſee! one of them advances, ſhe has
" gold buskins on her legs; in one hand ſhe holds an handkerchief of green
" ſilk, and in the other a topaz cup: ſhe beckons me with her head, ſaying,
" come hither, my well-beloved.—Stay for me, divine Houris, I ruſh among
" the battalions of the infidels, I give, I receive death, and fly to thee."

While the credulous Saracins thus diſtinctly ſaw the Houris, their love of conqueſts being proportionable to the greatneſs of the rewards they expected,

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(a) Many other miracles are related of Mahomet. A reſtive camel having perceived him at a diſtance, came to him, they ſay, and fell on his knees before the prophet, who, ſtroking him, ordered him to amend. It is ſaid, that at another time, the ſame prophet fed thirty thouſand men with a ſheep's liver. Father Maracio does not diſpute the fact, but pretends, that this was the work of the devil. With reſpect to the prodigies that are ſtill more aſtoniſhing, ſuch as cutting the moon in two, making the mountains dance, and a roaſted ſhoulder of mutton ſpeak, the Muſſulmans aſſert, the performance of ſuch amazing prodigies, ſo much above all human ſtrength and cunning, was abſolutely neceſſary to convince ſtubborn minds, who are always very difficult to be perſuaded of the truth of miracles.

The Perſians, according to Chardin, believe that Fatima, Mahomet's wife, was in her life time carried up to heaven. They celebrate her aſſumption.

animated

animated them with a courage ſuperior to that inſpired by the love of our country: it therefore produced the greateſt effects; for, we ſee, that in leſs than one century, they ſubdued more nations than the Romans had conquered in ſix hundred years.

Thus the Greeks, who were ſuperior to the Arabs in number, diſcipline, arms, and warlike machines, fled before them like doves at the ſight of the hawk (b). All the nations leagued together, could only have oppoſed an ineffectual barrier againſt them.

In order to reſiſt them, it would have been neceſſary to arm the Chriſtians with the ſame ſpirit as that with which the law of Mahomet animated the Muſſulmans; to promiſe heaven and the palm of martyrdom, as St. Bernard did, in the time of the Cruſades, to every warrior who died fighting the infidels: a propoſal the emperor Nicephorus made to the biſhops who were aſſembled. But they wanting the judgment of St. Bernard, unanimouſly rejected it (c). They did not perceive, that this refuſal would diſcourage the Greeks, promote the extinction of chriſtianity, and the progreſs of the Saracins, to which they could oppoſe no other defence, than a zeal equal to their fanaticiſm. Theſe biſhops, therefore, continued to attribute the calamities that laid waſte the empire, to the crimes of the nation, though a judicious eye might have diſcovered the cauſe, in the blindneſs of theſe very prelates, who, in ſuch conjunctures, might be conſidered as the ſcourges heaven made uſe of to afflict the empire.

The aſtoniſhing ſucceſs of the Saracins, depended ſo much on the ſtrength of their paſſions, and the ſtrength of their paſſions on the means made uſe of to excite them, that theſe very Arabs, theſe warriors ſo formidable, before whom the earth trembled, and the armies of the Greeks fled, and were diſperſed like the duſt before the wind, trembled themſelves, at the ſight of a ſect of Muſſulmans named Saffrians (d). Inflamed, like all reformers, with the fierceſt pride, and

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(b) The emperor Heraclius, aſtoniſhed at the numerous victories obtained over his armies, aſſembled a council compoſed rather of divines than ſtateſmen: the evils to which the nation was expoſed, were laid before them, and they enquired into the cauſe; upon which they concluded, according to the cuſtom of thoſe times, that the Almighty was offended at the crimes of the nation; and that the only way of puting a ſtop to ſo many misfortunes, was by prayer, faſting, and tears.

This reſolution being taken, the emperor conſidered none of the reſources that ſtill remained after ſo many diſaſters; reſources that would, at firſt have preſented themſelves to his mind, if he had known, that courage only ſprang from the paſſions; that ever ſince the deſtruction of the republic, the Romans being no longer animated by the love of their country, their ſending men without paſſions to fight ſuch fanatics, was oppoſing fearful ſheep againſt ravenous wolves.

(c) They alledged, in favour of their opinion, the ancient diſcipline of the eaſtern church, the thirteenth canon, and the letter of St. Bazil the Great, to Amphilochus. This letter declares, that "every ſoldier "that killed an enemy in battle, could "not receive the communion for three "years after." Whence it may be concluded, that though it is of the greateſt advantage to be governed by a man of ſenſe and diſcernment, nothing can ſometimes be more dangerous, than being governed by a ſaint.

(d) Theſe Saffrians were ſo formidable, that Adi, a captain of great reputation, having received orders to attack with ſix hundred

and a firm belief, these sectaries saw more distinctly the celestial pleasures, which hope presented to the other Mussulmans, at a confused distance. Thus, these furious Saffrians resolved to purge the earth of its errors, enlighten, or exterminate the nations, which at their appearance, they said, ought to be struck with light, or terror, and quit their prejudice, as speedily as an arrow is shot from a bow.

What I have said of the Arabs and Saffrians, may be applied to all the nations, influenced by the motives of religion; it is here the unequal degree of credulity, which, among different nations produces the equilibrium of their passions and courage.

In regard to passions of another kind, it is still the unequal degree of their strength, always occasioned by the diversity of their goverments, and the situations of the people, which in the same emergencies, determines them to act in so different a manner.

When Themistocles went armed, to raise considerable subsidies on the rich allies of the republic; those allies, says Plutarch, made haste to furnish him, because a fear, proportioned to the riches he might take from them, rendered them submissive to the will of the Athenians. But when the same Themistocles addressed himself to indigent people, and disembarking at Andros, made the same demand to those islanders, declaring that he came attended by two powerful deities, Necessity and Force, which, said he, always bring persuasion in their trains; "Themistocles, they replied, we should, like the other allies, submit "to thine orders, if we were not also protected by two deities as powerful as "thine, Indigence and Despair, which spurn at Force.

The vivacity of the passions depends, therefore, on the means employed by the legislator in kindling them, or in the situations in which fortune has placed us (e). The more lively our passions are, the greater are the effects produced by

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hundred men, an hundred and twenty of those fanatics, who were assembled in the government of a man named Ben Mervan, that captain represented; that each of these sectaries longing for death, might attack with advantage twenty Arabs; and that therefore the inequality of courage not being, on this occasion, compensated by the inequality of numbers, he would not hazard a battle, which the determined valour of these fanaticks rendered so unequal.

(e) Insignificant means always produce insignificant passions, and insignificant effects: grand motives are required to excite us to perform bold enterprizes. It is weakness, rather than folly, which in most governments perpetuates the abuse. We are not so inferior as we appear to be to posterity. Is there a man, for instance, who does not perceive the absurdity of the law, which prohibits citizens disposing of their effects, before they are twenty-five years of age, and yet, at sixteen, allows them to dispose of their liberty, by becoming monks? Every one knows the remedy of this evil, and perceives at the same time the difficulty of applying it. What obstacles does the interest of some societies raise against the public interest in this respect? What long and painful efforts of courage and judgment, and what constancy does the execution of such a project suppose? Perhaps it would be necessary, in order to make the attempt, that placemen should be prompted by the hope of the greatest glory, and flatter themselves that public gratitude would every where erect statues to their memory. We ought always to recollect, that in morality, as well as in natural philosophy and mechanics, the effects are always proportioned to the causes.

them.

them. Thus ſucceſs, as all hiſtory proves, conſtantly attends the people who are animated by ſtrong paſſions: a truth too little known, the ignorance of which has oppoſed the progreſs that otherwiſe might have been made in the art of inſpiring the paſſions: this art is at preſent unknown even to thoſe politicians of reputation who calculate pretty juſtly the intereſt and ſtrength of a ſtate, but have never perceived the ſingular reſources, which, in critical conjunctures, might have been drawn from the paſſions, when people have the art of exciting them.

The principles of this art, though as certain as thoſe of geometry, appear, in fact, to have been hitherto perceived only by great men, with reſpect to war and politics. Upon which I ſhall obſerve, that if the virtues, the courage, and conſequently the paſſions, with which ſoldiers are animated, contribute no leſs to obtain a victory, than the order in which they are ranged; a treatiſe on the art of inſpiring them would be of no leſs uſe to generals, than the excellent treatiſe of the illuſtrious chevalier Folard on Tactics (f).

It was the paſſions united to the love of liberty, and the hatred of ſlavery, more than the skill of the engineers, that occaſioned the celebrated and obſtinate defence of Abydos, Saguntum, Carthage, Numantia, and Rhodes.

In the art of exciting the paſſions, Alexander excelled almoſt all other great generals: to this art he owed thoſe inſtances of ſucceſs, ſo often attributed, by thoſe who are called men of ſenſe, to chance or a fooliſh raſhneſs, becauſe they do not perceive the almoſt invincible ſprings by which that hero performed ſo many prodigies.

The concluſion of this chapter is, that the ſtrength of the paſſions is always proportioned to the ſtrength of the means made uſe of to inſpire them. Now I ought to examine, if theſe very paſſions may in all men, well organiſed, be carried to ſuch a height as to endue them with that continued attention to which ſuperiority of genius is attached.

CHAP. XXVI.

Of what degree of Paſſion men are ſuſceptible.

IF, in order to determine this degree, I tranſport myſelf over the mountains of Abyſſinia, I there ſee men, at the order of their khalifs, become impatient of death, and precipitate themſelves on the points of poniards and rocks, and others into the abyſs of the ſea: no other reward is, however, propoſed to them, beſides the celeſtial pleaſures promiſed to all Muſulmans; but

(f) Diſcipline is, in a manner, nothing elſe but the art of inſpiring ſoldiers with a greater fear of their officers than of the enemy. This fear has often the effect of courage: but it cannot prevail againſt the fierce and obſtinate valour of people animated by fanaticiſm, or a warm love of their country.

their poſſeſſion appears more certain; conſequently the deſire of enjoying them makes more lively impreſſions on their minds, and their efforts to merit them are proportionally greater.

In no other place, beſides Abyſſinia, is ſo much care and art employed to confirm the belief of theſe blind and zealous executioners of the will of their prince. The victims deſtined to this employment, can nowhere receive an education ſo proper to form fanatics. Tranſported from the moſt tender age into a diſtant, wild, and loneſome part of the ſeraglio, where reaſon is made to wander in the darkneſs of the Muſulman's faith, they are informed of the miſſion and the laws of Mahomet, the prodigies performed by that prophet, and the abſolute reſignation due to the orders of the khalifs: there, by giving them the moſt voluptuous deſcriptions of paradiſe, they fill them with the moſt ardent deſire for celeſtial pleaſures. Scarce have they arrived at that age, when they become ſenſible of pleaſure, when, by impetuous deſire, nature indicates their impatience and power of enjoying the moſt lively gratifications, then in order to fortify the belief of a young man, and to enflame him with the moſt violent fanaticiſm, the prieſt, after having mixed an intoxicating liquor in his drink, tranſports him, during his ſleep, from his gloomy abode to a delightful grove appointed for that uſe.

There, reclined on a bed of flowers, ſurrounded with ſpouting fountains he repoſes till Aurora, by giving form and colour to the univerſe, awakes all the productive powers of nature, and makes love circulate in the veins of youth. Struck with the novelty of the objects that ſurround him, the young man looks about, and fixes his eyes on ſeveral fine women, whom his credulous imagination transforms into Houris. Theſe, being accomplices in the cheat formed by the prieſt, are inſtructed in the art of ſeducing; he ſees them advancing towards him, dancing, they enjoy his ſurpriſe; by a thouſand ſportive motions they excite in him unknown deſires, oppoſe the ſlight gauze of a pretended modeſty to the impatient wiſhes with which they enflame him: they, at length, yield to love; then changing thoſe ſportive actions to careſſes, plunge him in delight. This intoxication is ſucceeded by a voluptuous repoſe, which is ſoon interrupted by freſh pleaſures; till the young man's deſires being gratified, he is conducted by theſe women to a delicious banquet, where he is again intoxicated with liquor, and carried, during his ſleep, to his firſt abode. There he no ſooner awakes, than he ſeeks for the objects with which he had been enchanted; but, like a deceitful viſion, they are vaniſhed from his ſight; he ſtill calls the Houris: he finds none near him, but the Imans: he relates to them his dream, which is no ſooner ended, than placing their foreheads on the earth, the Imans ſay, "O veſſel of election! O my ſon! doubtleſs our holy "prophet has taken thee up into paradiſe to give thee a foretaſte of the plea-"ſures reſerved for the faithful, in order to ſtrengthen thy faith and courage. "Merit, therefore, ſo particular a favour, by being abſolutely devoted to the "orders of the khalifs."

By a ſimilar education the derviſes animated the followers of Iſmael with the firmeſt belief: thus they made them entertain an hatred of life, and a love of death, which they conſidered as the gate that afforded an entrance to celeſtial pleaſures, and inſpired them with that determined courage, which for ſome time aſtoniſhed the univerſe.

I ſay,

I ſay for ſome time, becauſe this kind of courage ſoon diſappears with the cauſe that produced it. Of all the paſſions, that of fanaticiſm founded on the deſire of pleaſure is doubtleſs the ſtrongeſt, and always the leaſt durable, becauſe fanaticiſm being only founded on prejudice and deceit, reaſon muſt inſenſibly ſap its foundation. Thus the Arabs, the Abyſſinians, and in general all the Mahometan nations, within the ſpace of one century, loſt all that ſuperiority of courage which had diſtinguiſhed them from all other people; and in this particular they were much inferior to the Romans.

The bravery of theſe laſt, excited by a ſpirit of patriotiſm, and founded on real and temporal rewards, would always have been the ſame, if luxury had not paſſed into Rome with the ſpoils of Aſia; if the deſire of riches had not broke the chain that united perſonal and general intereſt, and had not at once corrupted the manners and form of government among that people.

I cannot help obſerving with reſpect to theſe two kinds of courage, the one founded on religious fanaticiſm, and the other on the love of our country, that the latter is the only one with which a wiſe legiſlator ought to inſpire his fellow-citizens. A fanatic courage is ſoon weakened and extinguiſhed. Beſides, this courage deriving its ſource from the blindneſs of ſuperſtition, a nation has no ſooner loſt its fanaticiſm, than nothing remains but its ſtupidity; and it then becomes the contempt of all nations, to which it is in every reſpect really inferior.

It is to the Muſulman's ſtupidity that the Chriſtians owe ſo many advantages obtained over the Turks, who by their numbers alone, ſays the chevalier Folard, would be too formidable, if they made ſome ſlight changes in the order of battle, their diſcipline and arms; if they quitted the ſabre for the bayonet, and could lay aſide the ignorance in which they will ever be kept by ſuperſtition; for their religion, he adds, is only fit to eterniſe the ſtupidity of that nation.

I have ſhewn, that the paſſions are capable of making us perform prodigies: a truth proved both by the deſperate courage of the followers of Iſmael; by the meditations of the Gymnoſophiſts, whoſe probation is not finiſhed till after a retreat of thirty-ſeven years ſpent in ſilence and ſtudy; by the barbarous and continued macerations of the Fakers; by the revengeful fury of the Japaneſe (a); by the duels of the Europeans; and in ſhort, by the firmneſs of the Roman gladiators, who on receiving a mortal blow, fell and died with the ſame courage with which they had fought.

All men, as I propoſe to prove, are then, in general, ſuſceptible of a degree of paſſion more than ſufficient to make them triumph over their lazineſs, and to endue them with that continuance of attention to which ſuperiority of knowledge is attached.

(a) One of theſe rips open his belly in the preſence of the perſon who offended him; upon which the latter is, under pain of infamy, obliged to follow his example, and rip up his.

The great inequality of mind, obſervable in mankind, therefore, only depends on the different education they receive, and the unknown and varied chain of circumſtances in which they are placed.

In fact, if all the operations of the mind are reducible to perceiving, remembering, and obſerving the relations that ſubſiſt between different objects, and their connection with us, it is evident that all men being endued, as I have already ſhewn, with ſenſe, extent of memory, and, in ſhort, with the capacity of attention neceſſary to render them capable of the higheſt ideas; among men who are well organiſed (b), there are conſequently none who may not render themſelves illuſtrous by great talents.

I ſhall add, as a ſecond demonſtration of this truth, that all the falſe judgments, as I have proved in my firſt diſcourſe, are the effect either of ignorance, or of the paſſions: of ignorance, when we have not in our memory the ſubjects of compariſon from whence the truths we are in ſearch of ought to reſult: of the paſſions, when they are ſo modified that we have an intereſt in ſeeing objects different from what they really are. Now theſe cauſes, which are the only general ones that produce our errors, are entirely accidental.

Ignorance, in the firſt place, is not neceſſary; it is not produced by any defect in the organization, ſince there is no man, as I have ſhewn in the beginning of this diſcourſe, who is not endued with a memory capable of containing infinitely more objects than are required for the diſcovery of the moſt important truths. In regard to the paſſions, the natural wants being the only paſſions immediately given by nature, and the wants being never deceitful, it is evident that the want of juſt thinking is never produced by a defect in the organization; and that we have all the power of forming the ſame judgments on the ſame things. Now to have the ſame view of them is to have equal abilities of mind. It is then certain, that the inequality of abilities obſervable in the men whom I call well organiſed, does no ways depend on the greater or leſs degree of the excellence of their organization (c); but on the different education they have received, on the various circumſtances in which they have been placed, and, in ſhort, on the little aptitude they have for thought, from the hatred they have contracted in early

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(b) That is, thoſe in whoſe organization we perceive no defect, which is the caſe with moſt men.

(c) I obſerve on this ſubject, that the title of a man of genius, as I have ſhewn in the ſecond diſcourſe, is not granted on account of the number or delicacy, but the happy choice of the ideas preſented to the public; and if chance, as experience proves, determines us to engage in more or leſs intereſting ſtudies, and almoſt conſtantly makes us chuſe the ſubjects of which we treat; thoſe who conſider genius as a gift of nature, are, upon this ſuppoſition, obliged to confeſs that genius is rather the effect of chance than the excellence of the organization; and that it cannot be conſidered as the mere gift of nature; unleſs the word *nature* be extended to the eternal and univerſal chain which binds together all the events that happen in the world, and in which the idea even of chance is comprehended.

youth

youth for application, of which they became abſolutely incapable in a more advanced age.

How probable ſoever this opinion may be, as its novelty may ſtill produce ſurpriſe, ſince we with difficulty lay aſide ancient prejudices, and, in ſhort, as the truth of a ſyſtem is proved by the explication of the phænomena that depend upon it; I am going, in conſequence of my principles, to ſhew, in the following chapter, why ſo few perſons of genius are to be found among mankind, when all are formed to be of this claſs.

CHAP. XXVII.

Of the agreement of facts, with the principles above eſtabliſhed.

EXPERIENCE ſeems to contradict my doctrines, and this apparent contradiction may render my opinions ſuſpected. If all men, ſay they, have equal capacities, why in a kingdom, compoſed of fifteen or eighteen millions of people, do we ſee ſo few of ſuch men, as Turenne, Rony, Colbert, Deſcartes, Corneille, Moliere, Quinault, le Brun, and, in ſhort, of thoſe men who are mentioned as an honour to their age and country?

To reſolve this queſtion, let us examine the vaſt concourſe of circumſtances abſolutely neceſſary to form illuſtrious men of what kind ſoever, and we ſhall acknowledge, that men are ſo rarely placed in that happy concourſe of circumſtances, that geniuſes of the firſt order muſt be in fact as ſcarce as they are found to be.

Suppoſing in France ſixteen millions of perſons endued with the moſt happy diſpoſition of mind; ſuppoſing an ardent deſire in the government of calling forth theſe diſpoſitions, yet, as experience ſhews, books, men, and the aſſiſtance proper to unfold theſe diſpoſitions, are only to be found in an opulent city, it is, conſequently, among the eight hundred thouſand perſons who live, or have long lived at Paris (a), that we ought to find men ſuperior in the different arts and ſciences. Now, if from theſe eight hundred thouſand perſons we firſt deduct half, that is, the women, whoſe education and manner of life oppoſe the progreſs they might make in the arts and ſciences; if we exclude alſo children, old men, artizans, manufacturers, monks, domeſtics, ſoldiers, the merchants, and, in general, all thoſe who by their ſtations, dignities, and riches, are ſubject to employments, or given

(a) If we run over the liſt of great men, we ſhall ſee that Moliere, Quinault, Corneille, Condé, Paſcal, Fontenelle, Mallebranche, &c. have been under a neceſſity of improving their minds by the aſſiſtances to be obtained in the capital; that country talents are always condemned to obſcurity; and that the muſes, ſo fond of woods, meadows, and fountains, would be no better than country laſſes, if they did not from time to time breathe the air of great cities.

up

up to pleaſure, which take up a part of their time; if we conſider, in ſhort, the ſmall number of thoſe, who being placed in their youth in that ſtation where they feel no other pain than that of not being able to comfort all the miſerable, and who can, without inquietude, give themſelves up intirely to ſtudy and reflection; it is certain, that this number cannot exceed that of ſix thouſand; that of theſe ſix thouſand, there are not ſix hundred animated with the deſire of inſtruction; that of theſe ſix hundred, there are not half of them animated with this deſire, with the degree of warmth proper to fertilize grand ideas; that we cannot reckon a hundred who add to the deſire of inſtruction, the conſtancy and patience neceſſary to carry their abilities to perfection, and who thus unite two qualities, which vanity, too impatient of producing itſelf to view, ever hinders being united; in theſe there are not, perhaps, fifty who in their early youth have always applied to the ſame kind of ſtudy, who have always been inſenſible to love and ambition, and who have not in too varied ſtudies, in pleaſures, or intrigue, loſt the moments, the loſs of which is always irreparable to whatever would render himſelf ſuperior in any ſcience or art whatſoever. Now of theſe fifty, who, divided by ſeveral kinds of ſtudy, will produce only one or two of each kind, if I deduct thoſe who have not read the works, lived with the men moſt proper to enlighten them; and from this number, thus reduced, I ſtill retrench all thoſe whoſe progreſs has been ſtopped by death, the reverſes of fortune, or other accidents; I ſay, that under the actual form of our government, the multitude of circumſtances, the concourſe of which is abſolutely neceſſary to form great men, oppoſes their multiplication, and the men of genius muſt be as uncommon as they really are.

We ought then only to ſearch into morals for the true cauſe of the inequality obſervable in various minds; to account, therefore, for the ſcarcity, or multiplicity of great men in certain ages or countries, we have no reaſon to have recourſe to the influence of the air, and the different climates, which, ſo conſtantly repeated, have been always contradicted both by hiſtory and experience.

If the different temperature of climates had ſuch an influence on the mind and its capacities, how comes it that the Romans (b), ſo magnanimous, ſo brave under a republican government, are now ſo daſtardly and effeminate? How comes it that the Greeks and Romans, who were formerly ſo worthy of eſteem for their wit and virtue, and were the admiration of the earth, are now dwindled into contempt? How comes it that thoſe Aſiatics, ſo brave under the name of Eleamites, were ſo cowardly and baſe in the time of Alexander, under that of Perſians; and yet under the name of Parthians became the terror of Rome, and that in an age when the

(b) Though ſome people acknowlege that the Romans, at preſent, do not reſemble the ancient Romans, yet they pretend that they have this in common, their being the maſters of the world. As ancient Rome, ſay they, conquered is by her virtues and her valour, ſo modern Rome has reconquered it by her plots and political artifices; and Pope Gregory VII. is the Cæſar of this ſecond Rome.

Romans

Romans had loſt none of their courage and diſcipline? How comes it that the Spartans, the moſt brave and virtuous of the Greeks, while they were religious obſervers of the laws of Lycurgus, loſt their reputation for both, when, after the Peloponeſan war, they ſuffered gold and luxury to be introduced among them? How comes it that the ancient Cattæ, ſo formidable to the Gauls, are now void of the ſame courage? How comes it that the Jews, ſo often defeated by their enemies, ſhewed under the conduct of the Maccabees a courage worthy of the moſt warlike nation? How comes it that the arts and ſciences have been by turns cultivated and neglected by different nations, and have ſucceſſively run through almoſt all climates?

In one of Lucian's dialogues, that philoſopher ſays, "It was not in "Greece, that I made my firſt abode. I began by directing my ſteps to-"wards the Indus; and the Indian, to hear me, humbly deſcended from "his elephant. From the Indies, I turned towards Ethiopia; I tranſported "myſelf into Egypt; from Egypt, I went to Babylon; I ſtopped in Scythia; "I returned by Thrace. I converſed with Orpheus, and Orpheus brought me "into Greece."

Why did philoſophy paſs from Greece into Heſperia, from Heſperia to Conſtantinople and Arabia? and why repaſſing Arabia into Italy, has it found an aſylum in France, England, and even in the north of Europe? Why do we no longer find a Phocion at Athens, a Pelopidas at Thebes, and a Decius at Rome? The temperature of theſe climates is not changed: to what then ought we to attribute the tranſmigration of arts, ſciences, courage, and virtue, if it is not to be aſcribed to moral cauſes?

To theſe cauſes we owe the explanation of an infinite number of political phænomena, which people in vain endeavour to explain by phyſical cauſes. Such are the conqueſts of the people of the north, the ſlavery and allegorical genius of the orientals, and the ſuperiority of certain nations in certain ſciences: a ſuperiority which they will ceaſe, I think, to attribute to the different temperature of the climate, when I have rapidly pointed out the cauſe of theſe principal effects.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Of the conqueſts of the northern nations.

THE phyſical cauſe of the conqueſts made by the inhabitants of the northern part of Europe, is ſaid to be derived from that ſuperiority of courage or ſtrength, which nature has given to the northern nations, preferably to thoſe of the ſouth. This opinion, ſo proper to flatter the pride of the nations of Europe, moſt of which derive their origin from thoſe people, have met with no oppoſition. However, in order to aſſure ourſelves of the truth of ſo flattering an opinion, let us examine, whether the inhabitants of the north are really poſſeſſed of greater bravery than thoſe of the ſouth. For this purpoſe,

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let us firſt enquire what courage is, and aſcend up to the principles that may throw a light upon one of the moſt important queſtions in morality and politics.

Courage in animals is only the effect of their wants, and theſe being gratified, they become cowards: the famiſhed lion attacks a man; the lion, whoſe ſtomach is filled, flies from him. The hunger of animals being once appeaſed, the ſelf-love of every being, ſo neceſſary to its preſervation, makes it fly from all danger. Courage in animals is, therefore, an effect of their want. We give the epithet of timid to the animals who feed on graſs, only becauſe they are not forced to fight for food, and have no motive to brave dangers: if they have a want, they become courageous; the ſtag, in rutting time, is as furious as a beaſt of prey.

Let us apply to man, what I have ſaid of animals. Death is always preceeded by pain, and life always accompanied with ſome pleaſure. We are then attached to life by the fear of pain and the love of pleaſure: the happier life is, the more are we afraid to loſe it: and from thence proceeds the horror felt by thoſe who live in plenty at the approach of death. On the contrary, the leſs happineſs there is in life, the leſs do people regret to leave it: hence proceeds the inſenſibility with which the peaſant waits for his diſſolution.

Now, if the love of our being is founded on the fear of pain, and the love of pleaſure, the deſire of being happy is more powerful than the deſire of life. To obtain the object in the poſſeſſion of which we place our happineſs, every one is capable of expoſing himſelf to dangers, either of a greater or a leſs nature, but always proportioned to the greater or leſs warmth of deſire the perſon feels for poſſeſſing that object (a). To be abſolutely without courage, it is neceſſary to be abſolutely without deſire.

The objects of the deſires of mankind are various; they are animated with different paſſions, as avarice, ambition, the love of their country, that of women, &c. Conſequently, the man capable of the boldeſt reſolution to gratify one particular paſſion, will be without courage when another paſſion is concerned. We have a thouſand times ſeen the buccanier animated by a valour more than human, when ſtimulated by the hope of booty, yet find himſelf without the courage to revenge an affront. Cæſar, whom no danger could terrify in his march to glory, mounted with trembling into this carr, and never ſat down in it till he had ſuperſtitiouſly repeated three times a certain verſe, which he imagined had the power to keep him from being thrown from it (b). The fearful man, whom every danger affrights, may be animated with the moſt deſperate courage, in the defence of his wife, his miſtreſs, or his children. In this manner we may explain a part of the phænomena of courage, and the reaſon why the ſame man is brave or timorous according to the various circumſtances in which he is placed.

(a) The moſt courageous nation is, conſequently, that where valour is beſt rewarded, and cowardice moſt puniſhed.

(b) See the Critical Hiſtory of Philoſophy.

After

After having proved, that courage is the effect of our wants, a force communicated to us by our paſſions, and that it is exerted on obſtacles, which chance, or the intereſt of others oppoſe to our happineſs; it is proper now to prevent all objections, and to throw a greater light on a ſubject of ſuch importance, to diſtinguiſh two kinds of courage.

The one, which I call true courage, conſiſts in ſeeing danger as it is, and facing it. The other has, in a manner, nothing but effects: this kind of courage, common to almoſt all men, makes them brave dangers, becauſe they are ignorant of them; for the paſſions, by fixing all their attention on the object of their deſires, conceals from them, at leaſt, a part of the danger to which they expoſe themſelves.

To have an exact meaſure of the true courage of this ſort of men, it is neceſſary to take away all that part of the danger, which paſſion or prejudice conceals from them; and this part is very conſiderable. Propoſe the plunder of a city to the ſame ſoldier who would mount with fear to the aſſault, avarice will facinate his eyes, he will wait impatiently for the hour of attack: the danger will diſappear; and his intrepidity will be in proportion to his avarice. A thouſand other cauſes produce the effect of avarice, the old ſoldier is brave, becauſe the cuſtom of being in a danger, from which he has always eſcaped, renders it almoſt nothing in his view; the victorious ſoldier marches to the enemy with intrepidity, becauſe he does not expect much reſiſtance, and believes, that he ſhall triumph without danger. This is bold, becauſe he thinks himſelf fortunate; that, from an opinion of his own valour; and a third, becauſe he thinks himſelf very expert. Courage is ſeldom founded on a true contempt of death. Thus, the man who is intrepid with a ſword in his hand, will be often a coward at fighting with piſtols. Remove the ſoldier who braves death in battle, into a ſhip, and he will look with horror on a tempeſt, becauſe he really ſees nothing but deſtruction.

Courage is often then only the effect of a man's not having a clear view of the danger he confronts, or of his being intirely ignorant of it. How many are there, who are ſeized with terror at the noiſe of thunder, and would be afraid to paſs a night in a wood, at a diſtance from the high road, while there are none found who do not paſs in the night without fear from Paris to Verſailles? However, the blunder of a poſtillion, or the meeting an aſſaſſin on the high road, are accidents more common, and conſequently more to be feared than a clap of thunder, or the meeting an aſſaſſin in a diſtant wood. Why then is fear more common in the firſt caſe, than in the laſt? It is becauſe flaſhes of lightning, and the noiſe of thunder, as well as the darkneſs of woods, preſent every inſtant to the mind images, that gives us the idea of danger, which do not ariſe in our minds in the road from Paris to Verſailles. There are few men who can ſupport the preſence of danger: its appearance has ſuch an effect upon them, that we have ſeen men aſhamed of their cowardice, kill themſelves, though they had not the power to revenge an affront. The face of their enemy ſilenced in their breaſts, the cries of honour; which to obey, they muſt by alone working up this ſenſation in their minds, and then ſeizing the moment of their rage, to give themſelves death, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, without perceiving what they are about.

Thus, to prevent the effect produced by the ſight of danger, in almoſt all mankind, people at war are not content to range their ſoldiers in an order that renders their flight very difficult; in Aſia, they heat them with opium, in Europe, with brandy, and encourage them with the ſound of the drum, or by their united ſhouts (c). By theſe means, on concealing a part of the danger to which they are expoſed, they place their love of honour in an equilibrium with their fear. What I have ſaid of the common ſoldiers, I alſo ſay of the officers; among the moſt brave, there are few, who in bed (d), or on the ſcaffold, conſider death with a tranquil eye. What weakneſs did marſhal Biron, ſo brave in the field, betray at the execution of his ſentence?

In order to ſupport the appearance of death, it is neceſſary to have a diſguſt for life, or to be carried away by ſuch ſtrong paſſions, as determined Calanus, Cato, and Portia, to kill themſelves. Thoſe animated by theſe ſtrong paſſions, love life only on certain conditions, their paſſions do not conceal from them the danger to which they expoſe themſelves: they ſee it as it is, and brave it. Brutus reſolves to free Rome from tyranny, he aſſaſſinates Cæſar, raiſes an army, and fights Octavius; he is conquered, and kills himſelf: life is inſupportable without the liberty of Rome.

Whoever is ſuſceptible of ſuch ſtrong paſſions, is alſo capable of performing the greateſt action; he not only braves death, but alſo pain. This is not the caſe, with men who give themſelves death from a diſguſt of life; they merit almoſt as much the name of wiſe as of courageous; moſt of them would be without courage, amidſt the agonies of torture: for they have not life and ſtrength enough to ſupport pain. The contempt of life is not the effect of a ſtrong paſſion, but of the abſence of the paſſions; it is the reſult of a calculation, by which they prove to themſelves, that it is better not to be, than to be unhappy. Now, this diſpoſition of mind renders them incapable of great things. Whoever is diſguſted with life, employs himſelf but little about the affairs of this world. Thus, among ſo many Romans, who voluntarily embraced a violent death, there are few, who, by the killing of tyrants would have dared to have rendered themſelves uſeful to their country. In vain do they ſay, that the guards which on all ſides ſurrounded the palaces of tyranny, forbad their acceſs: their hands were diſarmed by the fear of puniſhment. Such men drown themſelves, or open their veins; but they did not expoſe themſelves to cruel torments, no motive could determine them to it.

(c) Marſhal Saxe, in his REVIRIES, ſpeaking of the Pruſſians, ſays, that a cuſtom they uſe of loading their muſkets as they march, is a very good one. Diverted by this employment, he adds, the ſoldier becomes leſs capable of attending to his danger.

Speaking of a people called the Æries, who painted their bodies in a frightful manner, he adds, why does Tacitus ſay, that in battle the eyes are firſt conquered? It is becauſe a new object recalls more diſtinctly to the ſoldiers memory the image of death, of which he had before but a confuſed view.

(d) If the young in general ſhew more courage on a death-bed, and greater weakneſs on the Scaffold, than the old; it is, becauſe, in the firſt caſe, young men preſerve more hope; and in the ſecond, ſuffer a greater loſs.

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It is the fear of pain that explains to us whatever is fantaſtical in this ſpecies of courage. If the man has ſuch reſolution, as to blow out his brains with a piſtol, and would ſhrink at ſtabbing himſelf with a dagger, and has an averſion to certain kinds of death, this only proceeds from a fear, either true or falſe, of ſuffering greater pain.

The principles above eſtabliſhed, I think, afford a reſolution to all queſtions of this kind, and prove, that courage is not, as ſome pretend, an effect of the different temperature of climates, but of the paſſions and wants, common to all men. The bounds of my ſubject, do not permit me to treat here of various names given to courage; ſuch as thoſe of bravery, valour, intrepidity, &c. Theſe are only the different ways in which courage is ſhewn.

This queſtion being diſcuſſed, I paſs to the ſecond. Whether, as it is pretended, we ought to attribute the conqueſts of the northern nations, to the peculiar ſtrength and vigour, with which nature has endowed them.

Experience will be of little ſervice in aſcertaining the truth of this opinion; for hitherto, no ſufficient proof has preſented itſelf to a ſcrupulous enquirer, that nature has given greater ſtrength to her productions in the north, than to thoſe in the ſouth. If the north has its white bears, and its orax, Africa has its lions, its rhinoceroſſes, and its elephants. They have not cauſed a certain number of negroes of the gold coaſt or Senegal, to wreſtle with an equal number of Ruſſians or Finlanders: they have not weighed the inequality of their ſtrength, by the different weights they are capable of lifting. So far are they from having any thing ſettled in this reſpect, that if I was to attack prejudice, with prejudice, I might oppoſe to whatever has been ſaid on the ſtrength of the northern nations, the praiſe given to that of the Turks. People can then no otherwiſe ſupport the opinion they have of the ſtrength and courage of the people of the north, but by the hiſtory of their conqueſts; and even here all nations may, from the ſame pretenſions, juſtify them by the ſame reaſons, and believe, that each is equally favoured by nature.

If we have recourſe to hiſtory, we there ſee the Huns quit the Palus Meotis to enſlave the nations ſituated to the north of their country: we there ſee the Saracins deſcend in crowds from the burning ſands of Arabia, to ſcourge the earth, ſubdue the nations, triumph over Spain, and ſpread deſolation even into the heart of France; we there ſee the ſame Saracins, break with their victorious hands, the ſtandards carried in the cruſades, and the nations of Europe, by repeated attempts in Paleſtine, multiply their ſhame and defeats.

If I direct my view to other regions, I ſtill ſee the truth of my opinion confirmed, as well by the triumphs of Tamerlane, who, from the banks of the Indus, purſues his victories, even to the frozen climates of Siberia; by the conqueſt of the Incas, and by the valour of the Egyptians, who, in the time of Cyrus, were eſteemed as the moſt courageous of all people, and proved themſelves at the battle of Tembreia, worthy of their reputation; and in ſhort, by thoſe Romans, who carried their victorious arms even into Sarmatia, and the iſland of Britain.

Since then victory has flown alternately from the ſouth to the north, and from the north to the ſouth; ſince all nations have been by turns conquering and

conquered; ſince, as hiſtory informs us (e), the people of the north are not much leſs ſenſible of the burning heat of the ſouth, than the people of the ſouth are of the piercing cold of the north, and both make war with equal diſadvantage in climates too different from their own, it is evident, that the conqueſts of the northern nations are abſolutely independent on the particular temperature of their climates; and that people ſearch in vain into phyſical cauſes, for a fact, where the moral one is ſo ſimply and naturally explained.

If the north has produced the laſt conquerors of Europe, it is becauſe fierce and ſavage nations, ſuch as thoſe of the north are (f), as the Chevalier Toland remarks, infinitely more courageous and warlike, than people indulged in luxury, ſoftneſs, and ſubject to arbitrary power, as were then the Romans (g). Under the laſt Emperors, the Romans were no longer that people, who, being the conquerors of the Gauls and Germans, held the ſouth alſo ſubject to their laws; for then thoſe maſters of the world had ſunk under the ſame virtues, that had made them triumph over the univerſe.

But in order to ſubdue Aſia, little more, it is ſaid, was neceſſary, than to carry chains there. The rapidity with which they conquered it, I reply, does not prove the cowardice of the people of the ſouth: What cities ever defended themſelves with more obſtinacy than Marſeilles, Numantia, Saguntum, and Rhodes? Did not the Romans in the time of Craſſus, find the Parthians enemies worthy of their courage? It is then to the ſlavery and ſoftneſs of the Aſiatics that the Romans owed the rapidity of their ſucceſs.

When Tacitus ſays, that the monarchy of the Parthians was leſs formidable to the Romans, than the liberty of the Germans, it is the form of government in the laſt, that he attributes the ſuperiority of their courage. It is then to moral cauſes, and not to the particular temperature of the countries of the north, that we ought to attribute the conqueſts of the northern nations.

(e) Tacitus ſays, that if the northern nations bore cold and hunger better than the ſouthern, theſe laſt ſupported heat and thirſt better than they.

The ſame Tacitus ſays, in his Manners of the Germans, that they could not ſupport the fatigues of war.

(f) Olaus Vormius, in his Daniſh Antiquities, confeſſes, that he drew moſt of his knowlege from the rocks of Denmark, that is, from the inſcriptions engraved upon them in Runic or Gothic characters. Theſe rocks formed a ſeries of hiſtory and chronology, that compoſed almoſt the whole library of the north.

In order to preſerve the memory of ſome events, they made uſe of unhewn ſtones of a prodigious ſize; ſome of theſe were thrown confuſedly together, and to others they gave ſome ſymetry. We ſee many of theſe ſtones on Saliſbury Plain in England, which ſerved as a ſepulchre to the princes, and heroes of the Britons, as is proved from the great quantity of bones and armour that has been found there.

(g) If the Gauls, ſays Cæſar, were formerly more warlike than the Germans, and now yield to them the glory of arms, it is becauſe the former, being inſtructed by the Romans in commerce, are become rich and civilized.

What has happened to the Gauls, ſays Tacitus, has happened to the Britons, theſe two nations have loſt their courage with their liberty.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of the Slavery, and allegorical Genius of the Eaſtern Nations.

EQUALLY ſhocked by the heavy yoke of deſpotic power, and the long and ſhameful patience of the people who groan under it, the weſtern nations, proud of their liberty, have recourſe to phyſical cauſes, to explain this political phænomenon. They have maintained, that the luxury of Aſia produced only men without ſtrength and courage, and that delivered up to brutal deſires, they are only born for ſlavery. They have added, that the countries in the ſouth are therefore, only capable of adopting a ſenſual religion.

Their conjectures are contradicted by hiſtory and experience: we know that Aſia has produced very warlike nations: that love does not weaken courage (a): that the nations moſt ſenſible of its pleaſures, have often been, as Plutarch and Plato obſerve, the moſt brave and courageous: that the ardent deſire of women can never be conſidered as a proof of the weakneſs of the conſtitutions of the Aſiatics (b); and that in ſhort, long before Mahomet, Odin had eſtabliſhed among the moſt northren nations, a religion, perfectly like that of the prophet of the ſouth (c).

Being forced to abandon this opinion, and to reſtore, if I may uſe the expreſſion, ſouls and bodies to the Aſiatics, people have thought to diſcover in the natural ſituation of the eaſtern nations, the cauſe of their ſlavery: in conſequence of which, they have conſidered the ſouth as a vaſt plain, whoſe extent furniſhes tyranny with the means of keeping their people in ſubjection. But unhappily this oppoſition is not confirmed by geography: we know the ſouth of the globe abounds in mountains: that the north, on the contrary, might be conſidered as a vaſt plain deſart, and covered with woods, as were probably the plains of Aſia.

After having in vain exhauſted phyſical cauſes, for the foundation of the eaſtern deſpotiſm, it is proper to have recourſe to moral cauſes, and conſe-

(a) The Gauls, ſays Tacitus, loved women, and treated them with the greateſt reſpect; they even conſidered them as ſomething divine, and therefore admitted them into their councils, and deliberated with them on ſtate affairs. The Germans treated theirs in the ſame manner; their deciſions ſeemed to be received by them as ſo many oracles. Under Veſpaſian, one Velleda, and before her one Aurinia, and ſeveral others, were treated with the ſame veneration. In fine, ſays Tacitus, the Germans owed to their aſſociating with women, both their courage in battle, and their wiſdom in councils.

(b) According to the Chevalier Beau-jeu, the northern nations have always been addicted to the pleaſures of love. Ogerius, in Itinere Danico, ſays the ſame thing.

(c) See in chap. xxv. the exact conformity between theſe two religions.

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quently to hiſtory. This informs us that the nations, by becoming civilized, inſenſibly loſt their courage, their virtue, and even their love of liberty; that every ſociety, immediately after its inſtitution, according to the different circumſtances in which it was placed, marched with a ſlower, or more rapid pace towards ſlavery. Now the ſouthern nations, being the firſt aſſembled in ſociety, muſt conſequently have been the firſt ſubject to deſpotic power; becauſe to this every ſpecies of government tends, and it is a form which every ſtate preſerves, till its intire deſtruction.

But ſay thoſe who believe the world more ancient than we do, how does it happen that there are ſtill republics upon earth? To this it may be replied, that if all ſocieties, by being civilized, tend to deſpotiſm, all deſpotic power tends to depopulation. The climates ſubject to this power, after a certain number of ages becoming uncultivated and depopulated, are changed into deſarts; the plains, in which were cities of immenſe extent, or where ſumptuous edifices were raiſed, became by little and little, covered with foreſts, in which ſome families took refuge, who, inſenſibly formed new nations of ſavages; and this ſucceſſion muſt conſtantly preſerve republics upon earth.

I ſhall only add to what I have juſt ſaid, that if the people of the ſouth have been longer ſlaves, and if the nations of Europe, except the Muſcovites, may be conſidered as free, it is becauſe, theſe nations have been more lately poliſhed: becauſe, in the time of Tacitus, the Germans and Gauls were ſtill no more than a kind of ſavages, and that unleſs a nation be at once driven to ſlavery by force of arms, this will not be accompliſhed till after a long ſucceſſion of ages, and by inſenſible, but continued attempts made by tyrants to extinguiſh in the hearts of their ſubjects, that virtuous love, which all mankind naturally have for liberty, and thus to debaſe the mind, ſo far as to make it bow to oppreſſion and ſlavery. When once a people have become thus unhappy, they are no longer capable of any noble and generous actions (d). If the nations of Aſia are the contempt of Europe, it is becauſe time has ſubdued them to a deſpotiſm incompatible with a certain elevation of mind. It is the ſame deſpotiſm ſo de-

(d) In theſe countries magnanimity never triumphs over revenge. We do not ſee in Turky, what happened ſome years ago in England. The young pretender being purſued by the king's troops, found an aſylum in the houſe of a perſon of diſtinction, who being accuſed of having afforded a retreat to the pretender, was ſummoned to appear before his judges; he did ſo, and on his appearance ſaid, "ſuffer me, before I anſwer any queſtions, to aſk, which of you, if the pretender had taken refuge in his houſe, would have proved ſo baſe and abject, as to have delivered him up?" At this queſtion the court was ſilent, aroſe, and diſmiſſed the accuſed.

We do not ſee in Turky the poſſeſſor of the land, trouble himſelf about the welfare of his vaſſals; a Turk does not eſtabliſh manufactures on his eſtate, he will not ſupport with a ſecret pleaſure, the inſolence of his inferiors; an inſolence with which a ſudden fortune almoſt always inſpires thoſe who are born in indigence. We ſhall never hear from his mouth, this fine anſwer made by an Engliſh lord, to thoſe who blamed him for his too great indulgence. "Were I deſirous of receiving more reſpect from my dependants, I ſhould conſider as well as you, that miſery has an humble and timid voice; but I wiſh them happy: and thank heaven, that their boldneſs now aſſures me, that they are richer and happier than they were."

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ſtructive to every ſpecies of genius and abilities, that has made people regard the ſtupidity of certain nations of the eaſt, as produced by a defect in their organization. It would however, be eaſy to perceive, that the exterior difference obſervable, for inſtance, in the countenances of the Chineſe aud the Swedes, can have no influence on their minds; and that, if all our ideas, as Mr. Locke has ſhewn, proceeds from the ſenſes, the northern nations having no greater number of ſenſes, than the Orientals, have by their natural conformation equal mental capacities.

It is only to the different conſtitution of empires, and conſequently, to moral cauſes, that we ought to attribute all the difference obſervable in the underſtandings and characters of nations. For inſtance, the Orientals owe to the form of their government that allegorical genius, which forms the diſtinguiſhing character of their works. In countries where the ſciences have been cultivated, where the people ſtill preſerve the deſire of writing, where they are however, ſubject to arbitrary power, and conſequently, the truth can only be preſented under an emblem, it is certain, that the authors muſt inſenſibly contract an allegorical manner of thinking. Thus to make I know not what tyrant ſenſible of the injuſtice, and the ſeverity with which he treated his ſubjects, and the reciprocal and neceſſary dependance, by which a ſovereign and his people are united, an Indian philoſopher invented, ſay they, the game of cheſs. He gave leſſons to the tyrant; made him remark, that if in this game the people became uſeful after the loſs of the king, the king after the taking of his men was found incapable of defence, and that in both caſes he was equally loſt (e).

I might give a thouſand other examples of the allegorical form, under which ideas are preſented to the Indians; theſe examples, I believe, are ſufficient to ſhew, that the form of the government to which the eaſtern nations owe ſo many ingenious allegories, have in thoſe countries occaſioned great ſcarcity of hiſtorians. For though the hiſtorical kind of writing, doubtleſs ſuppoſes great abilities, it does not however, require greater than any other kind. Why then, among their writers, are good hiſtorians ſo ſcarce? It is becauſe, in order to ob-

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(e) The viſiers have, by the like addreſs, found the means of giving uſeful leſſons to their ſovereigns. "A king of Perſia being exaſperated, depoſed his grand viſier, and choſe another in his room; however, as he was in other reſpects ſatisfied with the ſervices of him he had depoſed, he bad him chuſe whatever place in his dominions he pleaſed, where he might ſpend the reſt of his days, with his family, in the enjoyment of the fortune he had acquired. The viſier replied, I have no occaſion for all the wealth with which thou haſt loaded me; I therefore entreat thee to ſuffer me to reſtore it, and if thou haſt ſtill any favourable thoughts of me, I aſk not for a place inhabited, but earneſtly entreat thee to grant me ſome deſart village, that I may repeople it with my men, my labour, my care, and my induſtry. The king gave orders, that ſuch a village as he deſired, ſhould be ſought for; but after a long ſearch, thoſe entruſted with the commiſſion came to inform him, that they had been unable to find one. This the king told to the depoſed viſier, who then ſaid; I well knew, that there was not one ſingle ruined place in all the countries thou hadſt committed to my care. What I have done, was in order, that thou, O king, mighteſt know in what condition I have placed thy dominions, and that thou mighteſt charge another to render thee as good an account." Gallandi Bon mots des Orientaux.

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tain a reputation, it is neceſſary, not only to be born in an happy concourſe of circumſtances, proper to form a great man; but alſo, in countries where they may with impunity practice virtue, and ſpeak the truth. Now deſpotiſm oppoſes this, and ſhuts the mouth of hiſtorians (f), if its power is not in this reſpect limited by ſome prejudice, ſuperſtition, or particular eſtabliſhment. Such in China is the hiſtorical tribunal, a tribunal at preſent equally deaf to the entreaties and menaces of kings (g).

What I have ſaid of hiſtory, I ſay of eloquence. If Italy was ſo fruitful in orators, it was not as ſome learned pedants of the college weakly pretend, becauſe, the ſoil of Rome was more proper than that of Liſbon, or Conſtantinople, for producing great orators. Rome loſt at the ſame inſtant her eloquence, and her liberty: in the mean time, no accident happened to the earth under the emperors,

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(f) If in theſe countries the hiſtorian cannot mention the traitors, who in the preceding ages have ſometimes ſold their country, without expoſing himſelf to great dangers; if he is thus forced to ſacrifice the truth to the vanity of deſcendants, who are often as guilty as their anceſtors; how can a miniſter in theſe countries be of ſervice to the public? What obſtacles will be oppoſed to his projects by men in power, who are infinitely more intereſted in prolonging an abuſe, than in the reputation of their fathers? How, in theſe governments can any one dare to require virtue from a citizen, or to declaim againſt the wickedneſs of mankind. It is not the men who are wicked; but the legiſlation which renders them ſuch, by puniſhing every one who does well, and ſpeaks the truth.

(g) The hiſtorical tribunal, ſays Mr. Freret, is compoſed of two ſorts of hiſtorians, the one are entruſted with writing what paſſes without the palace, that is, every thing that relates to affairs in general; and the other every thing that paſſes in it, that is all the actions and diſcourſes of the prince, his miniſters, and officers. Every one of the members of this tribunal, writes upon a leaf of paper, whatever comes to his knowlege, ſigns it, and without communicating it to his brethren, throws it into a large cheſt, placed in the midſt of the hall where they aſſemble. To ſhew the ſpirit of this tribunal, Mr. Freret relates, that a general, named T-ſou-i-chong, cauſed his ſovereign, T-chouang-chong to be aſſaſſinated, for taking from him one of his wives. The hiſtorical tribunal prepared an account of that event, and placed it in the archives; when the general being informed of this ſtep, deprived the preſident of his place, condemned him to ſuffer death, ſuppreſſed the relation, and nominated another preſident in his room. But ſcarce was he fixed in his place, than he cauſed a new memorial of this event to be drawn up, to ſupply the place of the other. When the general being informed of this boldneſs, diſſolved the tribunal, and cauſed all the members to be put to death. Immediately the empire overflowed with an innudation of papers, in which the general's conduct was painted in the blackeſt colours. Upon which, fearing a ſedition, he reſtabliſhed the hiſtorical tribunal.

The annals of the dynaſty of Tang, relate another fact on this ſubject. Ta-i-t-ſong, the ſecond emperor of the dynaſty of Tang, one day demanded of the preſident of this tribunal, the ſight of the memoirs deſtined for the hiſtory of his reign. "My "lord, ſaid the preſident, know, that we "render an exact account of the virtues "and vices of ſovereigns; and that we "ſhould be no longer free, if thou ſhould'ſt "perſiſt in thy demand." —— "What, "replied the emperor, wilt thou who oweſt "all that thou haſt to me, wilt thou who "art ſo attached to me, inform poſterity "of my faults, if I commit any? It is not "in my power, ſaid the preſident to con-"ceal them. It would be with grief that "I ſhould write them; but ſuch is the duty "of my employment, that it obliges me "even to inform poſterity of the converſa-"tion thou haſt this day had with me."

nor

nor was the climate of Rome changed. To what then ought we to attribute the ſcarcity of orators that were then found among the Romans, if it was not owing to moral cauſes, that is, to the changes which happened in the form of their government? Who can doubt, that by forcing the orators to exert their talents on trifling ſubjects (h), deſpotiſm drained the ſources of eloquence? Its force principally conſiſts in the grandeur of the ſubjects of which it treats. Let us ſuppoſe, that as great a genius was required to write the panegyric on Trajan, as to compoſe the orations againſt Catiline: upon this ſuppoſition, I ſay, Pliny, from the choice of his ſubject, muſt remain much inferior to Cicero. The view of the latter was to draw the Romans from that lethargy in which Catiline would have ſurpriſed them; he ſtrove to awaken in them the paſſions of hatred and revenge; and muſt not a ſubject, ſo intereſting to the maſters of the world, have made them confer the palm of eloquence on Cicero?

If we examine the foundation of the reproaches of barbariſm and ſtupidity, which the Greeks, the Romans, and all the Europeans, have long caſt on the people of the eaſt, we ſhall ſee, that nations having given the name of genius only to ſuch aſſemblages of ideas as were of uſe to them, and deſpotiſm having in almoſt all Aſia prohibited the ſtudy of morality, metaphyſics, civil law, politics, and, in ſhort, of all the ſciences in which mankind are intereſted; the orientals muſt, conſequently, be treated as ſtupid barbarians by the enlightned people of Europe, and eternally become the contempt of free nations and of poſterity.

CHAP. XXX.

Of the Superiority of certain nations in different ſciences.

THE natural ſituation of Greece is always the ſame, why then are the Greeks at preſent different from what they were formerly? It is becauſe e form of their government is changed; like water which aſſumes the ſhape of all the veſſels into which it is poured, the character of nations is ſuſceptible of all forms, and in every country the genius of the government conſtitutes the genius of the nation (a). Now, under the republican government, what country

(h) The air of liberty, which Tacitus in his younger days breathed in the reign of Veſpaſian, gave a ſpring, a vigour to his ſoul; by whoſe energy, as the abbe de la Bletterie obſerves, he became a man of genius; whereas, had he been born in the reign of Nero, he never would have ſoared above the character of a ſenſible man.

(a) Nothing is generally more falſe and ridiculous than the portraits drawn to repreſent the characters of different nations. Some paint their own nation after the particular ſociety they frequent, and conſe-

country ought to be more fruitful of great generals, politicians, and heroes, than Greece? Without ſpeaking of ſtateſmen, what philoſophers muſt have been produced in a country where philoſophy was ſo honoured? Where king Philip, the conqueror of Greece, wrote to Ariſtotle: "I return thanks to the Gods, "not for their having given me a ſon, but for having cauſed him to be born "while thou art living. I entruſt thee with his education; and hope thou wilt "render him worthy of thee, and of me." What letter could be more flattering than that of Alexander, the maſter of the world, who, when ready to mount the throne of Cyrus, thus wrote to him: "I am informed that thou "art going to publiſh thy treatiſes on Acroatics. What ſuperiority ſhall I "now maintain over other men? The ſublime ſciences thou haſt taught me "will become common, and yet thou knoweſt that I had rather ſurpaſs men "in the knowlege of theſe noble ſubjects than in power. Adieu."

But philoſophy was not honoured in Ariſtotle alone. We know that Ptolemy, king of Egypt, treated Zeno as a ſovereign, and ſent ambaſſadors to him; that the Athenians erected a mauſoleum to that philoſopher, at the public expence; that, before Zeno's death, Antigonus, king of Macedonia, thus wrote to him: "Though fortune has raiſed me to the higheſt poſt, though I ſurpaſs "thee in grandeur, I acknowlege that thou ſurpaſſeſt me in wiſdom and in "virtue. Come then to my court; thou ſhalt be of uſe not only to a great "king, but alſo to the whole Macedonian nation. Thou knoweſt what an

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quently repreſent the people as gloomy or gay, dull or witty. Methinks I hear the order of friars, called the Minims, aſk, what is the taſte of the French with reſpect to cookery? and they reply, that every body in France eats oil. Others copy what a thouſand writers have ſaid before them; they have never examined the changes neceſſarily produced in the character of a people, by thoſe which happen in the adminiſtration, and the alteration of manners. It has been ſaid, that the French are gay; and this will be repeated to eternity. They do not perceive, that the misfortunes of the times having obliged the princes to lay conſiderable taxes on the country people, the French nation cannot be gay, becauſe the peaſants, who alone compoſe two thirds of the nation, are in want, and want can never be gay: that even, in regard to the cities, the neceſſity, it is ſaid, the police of Paris is under of defraying a part of the expence of the maſquerades performed on holidays at St. Anthony's gate, is not a proof of the gaiety of the artiſt and the citizen: ſpies may contribute to the ſafety of Paris; but being carried too far, they diffuſe a general diffidence through the minds of the people, that is abſolutely incompatible with joy, on account of the ill uſe that may be made of them: the youth, being forbid to enter a tavern, have loſt a part of that gaiety, which has frequent need of being animated by wine; that, in ſhort, good company, by baniſhing groſs joy from their aſſemblies, have baniſhed the true. Thus moſt foreigners find a great difference between the real character of our nation, and that it has obtained abroad. If gaiety ever dwells in any part of France, it is certainly on the ramparts in feſtival days; yet the people there are too wiſe to be eſteemed gay; for joy is always ſomewhat licentious. Beſides, gaiety ſuppoſes eaſe; and the true ſign of the eaſe of a people is what certain perſons call their inſolence; that is, their knowing the rights of humanity, and what man owes to man: a knowlege never acquired by thoſe who are diſcouraged, and rendered timid by poverty. Eaſe defends its rights, but indigence gives them up.

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" effect the power of example has on the people; they are the ſervile imitators " of our virtues, and he who inſpires princes with them, gives them to the " people. Farewel." Zeno replied: " I applaud the noble ardour with which " thou art animated: in the midſt of the feſtivity, pomp, and pleaſures, with " which kings are ſurrounded, it is beautiful to deſire wiſdom and virtue. My " great age, and the bad ſtate of my health, will not permit me to repair to thee; " but I ſend thee two of my diſciples: liſten to their inſtructions. If thou " heareſt them, they will ſhew thee the path of wiſdom and true happineſs. " Farewel."

It was not philoſophy alone, but to all the arts that the Greeks paid ſuch homage. A poet was ſo extremely admired in Greece, that the Athenians, by an expreſs law, forbad their leaving the country on pain of death (b). The Spartans, whom certain authors have taken a pleaſure in repreſenting as virtuous men, but leſs poliſhed, and not ſo ingenious as the other Greeks, were no leſs ſenſible than they to the beauties of the arts and ſciences (c). Paſſionately fond of poetry, they invited to them Archilocus, Xenodames, Xenocritus, Polymneſtes, Sacados, Periclitus, Phrynis, and Timotheus (d). So great was their eſteem for the poems of Terpander, Spendo, and Alcman, that there ſlaves were forbid to ſing them; they would have looked upon this as a profanation of divine things. They were not leſs skilled in the art of reaſoning than that of painting their thoughts in verſe: " Whoever, ſays Plato, " converſes with a Spartan, were he even the meaneſt among them, might find " him at firſt coarſe; but if he entered into a ſubject, he will hear him ſpeak " with a dignity, a preciſion, and a delicacy, that render his words like ſo " many ſharp arrows. Any other Greek beſides would appear but like a " ſtammering infant." Thus they learnt from their moſt early youth to ſpeak with elegance and purity. To juſtneſs of thinking, they added the graces and delicacy of expreſſion; that their anſwers being always ſhort and juſt, might be poignant and agreeable. Thoſe who, through precipitation or ſlowneſs, made either a bad anſwer, or none at all, were inſtantly puniſhed. Bad reaſoning was chaſtiſed at Sparta with as much ſeverity as in other places was ſhewn to a bad conduct. Nothing, therefore, could impoſe on the under-

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(b) A poet in the Marian iſlands is conſidered as a very ſurpriſing man, and this character alone renders him reſpected by the nation.

(c) Indeed, they had an abhorrence for all poetry tending to enervate their minds, and weaken their courage. They drove Archilocus from Sparta, for ſaying in verſe, that it was more wiſe to fly, than to die in arms. His exile was not the effect of their indifference for poetry, but of their love of virtue. The care taken by Lycurgus to collect the works of Homer; the ſtatue of Laughter raiſed in the midſt of Sparta, and the laws he gave to the Spartans, prove that this great man had no deſign of rendering them a dull and ſtupid people.

(d) Among the Lacedæmonians Cynetho, Dionyſodotus, Areus, and Chilo, one of the ſeven wiſe men, diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their poetic talents. The poetry of the Spartans, ſays Plutarch, was ſimple, maſculine, and full of energy: it was animated with that fire proper to fill the ſoul with warmth and courage.

ſtanding of this people. A Spartan, exempt from the cradle from the capricious humours and peeviſhneſs of childhood, was in his youth freed from all fear, he walked with aſſurance in ſolitude and darkneſs; and being leſs ſuperſtitious than the other Greeks, they cited their religion before the tribunal of reaſon.

It was impoſſible that the arts and ſciences ſhould not have ſhone with the greateſt luſtre in ſuch a country as Greece, where ſo general and ſo conſtant an honour was paid to them. I ſay, ſo conſtant, in order to anticipate the objection of thoſe who pretend, with the abbe Dubos, that, in certain ages, ſuch as thoſe of Auguſtus and Lewis XIV. certain winds blow over great men as they bring flights of uncommon birds. In favour of this opinion they allege the pains ſome ſovereigns have vainly taken to revive the arts and ſciences in their dominions (e). If the efforts of theſe princes, I reply, were not ſucceſsful, it was becauſe they were not conſtant. After ſome ages of ignorance, the ſoil of the arts and ſciences is ſometimes ſo wild and uncultivated that it cannot produce truly great men, till it has been firſt grubbed up by ſeveral generations of the learned. Such was the age of Lewis XIV. in which great men owed their ſuperiority to the learned who had preceded them in the ſtudy of the arts and ſciences: a ſtudy in which theſe learned would not have ſucceeded, had they not met with the favour of our kings, as is proved by the letters-patents of the 10th of May 1543, in which Francis I. expreſsly forbids curſing, and uſing invectives againſt Ariſtotle (f), and by the verſes which Charles IX. addreſſed to Ronſard (g).

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(e) Sovereigns are apt to think, that by a word, or by a law, they can ſuddenly change the ſpirit of a nation, and, for inſtance, render a cowardly and indolent people, courageous and active. They are ignorant that diſeaſes in the ſtate, which are long contracting, require much time in curing; and that in the body politic, as well as in the human, the impatience of the prince and the ſick perſons often oppoſe the cure.

(f) In the flouriſhing ages of the church, ſome have raiſed the books of Ariſtotle to the dignity of the divine text, and others have compared him with Jeſus Chriſt; ſome have advanced, in printed theſes, that were it not for Ariſtotle, religion would want its principal explications. They have ſacrificed to him many critics, and among others, Ramus: this philoſopher having cauſed a work to be printed, under the title of Cenſure on Ariſtotle, all the old doctors, who, ignorant from their ſtation, and obſtinate through ignorance, ſaw themſelves, in a manner, driven from their patrimony, and, therefore, caballed againſt Ramus, and cauſed him to be ſent into exile.

(g) Theſe are the verſes the monarch wrote to that poet:

L'art de faire des vers, dût-on s'en indigner,
Doit être à plus haut prix que celui de régner;
Ta lyre, qui ravit par de ſi doux accords,
T'aſſervit les eſprits dont je n'ai que les corps;
Elle s'en rend le maître, & te fait introduire
Où le plus fier tyran ne peut avoir d'empire.

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I ſhall add only one word to what I have juſt ſaid, which is, that as fire-works rapidly flying through the air, diſſeminate it with ſtars, and having for a moment enlightned the horizon, vaniſh, and leave nature in a more profound darkneſs; ſo the arts and ſciences, in many countries, do no more than blaze, diſappear, and abandon the people to the darkneſs of ignorance. The ages moſt fruitful in great men, are generally followed by an age in which the arts and ſciences are leſs happily cultivated. In order to diſcover the cauſe, we muſt not have recourſe to natural philoſophy, but to morality. In fact, if admiration is always the effect of ſurpriſe, the more great men are multiplied in a nation, the leſs are they eſteemed, the leſs is excited in them the ſpirit of emulation, the leſs are their efforts to attain to perfection, and the farther diſtant they are from it. After ſuch an age it becomes neceſſary that a country ſhould lie fallow during ſeveral ages of ignorance, to render it again fertile in great men.

It appears then, that we can only attribute the ſuperiority of certain nations over others in the arts and ſciences, to moral cauſes; and that there are no people privileged in point of virtue, genius, and courage. Nature, in this reſpect, has not made a partial diſtribution of her favours. Indeed, if the greater or leſs ſtrength of mind depended on the different climate of countries, it would be impoſſible, conſidering the age of the world, but that what was in this reſpect moſt favoured, ſhould by its progreſs have acquired a great ſuperiority over all others. The eſteem which different nations have by turns obtained, with reſpect to genius, and the contempt into which they have ſucceſſively fallen, prove the little influence climates have on the mind. I ſhall even add, that, if the place of our birth determined the extent of our intellects, moral cauſes could not here give us ſo ſimple and natural an explication of the phænomena that depended on phyſics. Upon which I ſhall obſerve, that, if there are no people to whom the climate of their particular country, and the ſmall difference it muſt produce in their organization, have at preſent given any conſtant ſuperiority over other nations, we may at leaſt ſuſpect, that the trifling differences to be found in the organization of the individuals of which a nation is compoſed, cannot have a more ſenſible influence on their minds (h). Every thing concurs to prove the truth of this propoſition. It ſeems that the moſt complicated problems of this kind preſent themſelves only to

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That is, The art of poetry, whoever it offends, is of greater value than that of ſwaying the ſceptre; the raviſhing harmony of thy lyre renders minds ſubject to thee, while I reign over bodies: it renders thee maſter, and thy pleaſing ſway is felt, where the power of tyranny cannot reach.

(h) If it cannot be ſtrictly ſhewn, that a difference of organization has not any influence on the abilities of the men whom I commonly call well organized, we may at leaſt aſſure ourſelves, that this influence is ſo inconſiderable, that they may be conſidered as thoſe quantities which are of ſuch ſmall importance, that we neglect them in algebraical calculations; and that, in ſhort, we may very well explain by moral cauſes, what has been hitherto attributed to natural ones, without any perſon's being able to explain them by thoſe cauſes.

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the mind, in order to be reſolved by the application of the principles I have eſtabliſhed.

Why do men of moderate abilities almoſt always reproach illuſtrious men with being guilty of a very extraordinary conduct? It is becauſe genius is not the gift of nature; and that a man, who embraces a kind of life that nearly reſembles that of the reſt of the ſociety, does not require an higher degree of underſtanding than theirs; becauſe a man of genius ſpends his time in ſtudy and application, and that a life ſo different from that of others will always appear ridiculous. Why is the preſent age more knowing than thoſe which preceeded it? And why is genius leſs common? Why, as Pythagoras ſays, do we ſee ſo many people take the thyrſis, and ſo few animated by the ſpirit of the God who carries it? It is becauſe men of learning being too often forced from their cloſets by want, and obliged to enter into the world: there they diffuſe knowlege, and form men of abilities; but they neceſſarily loſe the time, which, by being ſpent in ſolitude and reflection, would have given a greater extent to their genius. The man of learning is like a body, that, having been forcibly ſtruck againſt other bodies, loſes the force it communicates to them.

Theſe are the moral cauſes that give us an explanation of all the various phænomena of the mind; and inform us, that, like the fiery particles which lie incloſed in gun-powder, and remain there without action, if no ſpark ſets them in motion, the mind remains without action, till it is actuated by the paſſions; that the paſſions often render a man who is ſtupid a man of ſenſe, and that we owe all to education.

If, as it is pretended, genius is a gift of nature, why, among the men of certain employments, or thoſe who were born, or have long lived in the country, are there none who excell in poetry, muſic, and painting? Why does not the gift of genius ſupply in men, entruſted with employments, the loſs of time taken up by their poſts? And in country gentlemen, why does it not counterbalance the converſation of the ſmall number of men of abilities, who are only to be found in the capital? Why have the great no genius for any thing but what has long engaged their application? Is it not evident, that, if the man of genius does not preſerve the ſame ſuperiority on other ſubjects, it is becauſe he has not made them the objects of his attention? For the man of genius has no advantage over other men but the habit of application, and a method of ſtudy. What is the reaſon, why among great men there are ſo few great miniſters? It is becauſe to the multitude of circumſtances that muſt neceſſarily concur to form a great genius, there muſt be united a concurrence of circumſtances proper to raiſe this man to the genius of a miniſter. Now the union of theſe circumſtances, ſo extremely uncommon among all nations, is almoſt impoſſible in countries where merit alone does not entitle a perſon to the higheſt poſts. Therefore, if we except Xenophon, Scipio, Confucius, Cæſar, Hanibal, Lycurgus, and perhaps about fifty ſtateſmen in the whole world, whoſe minds might really ſtand the teſt of ſtrict examination, all the others, and even ſome of the moſt celebrated in hiſtory, whoſe actions have made the greateſt noiſe, notwithſtanding all the encomiums laviſhed on their extenſive talents, were but men of very common capacities. It is to the force of their character

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in life, more than to that of their minds, that they owe their fame (i). The little progreſs made in legiſlation, the indifference of ſeveral works that are almoſt unknown left by Auguſtus, Tiberius, Titus, Antoninus, Adrian, and Charles V. and which they have compoſed on ſubjects in which they ought to have excelled, too plainly prove the truth of this opinion.

The general concluſion of this diſcourſe is, that genius is common, and the circumſtances, proper to unfold it, very extraordinary. If we may compare what is profane with what is ſacred, we may ſay in this reſpect, Many are called, but few are choſen.

The inequality obſervable among men, therefore, depends on the government under which they lie; on the greater or leſs happineſs of the age in which they are born; on the education; on their deſire of improvement, and on the importance of the ideas that are the ſubject of their contemplations.

The man of genius is then only produced by the circumſtances in which he is placed (k). Thus all the art of education conſiſts in placing young men in

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(i) The force of characters, which are often unjuſt, render a perſon in political affairs more proper for performing great things, than perſons of great genius whoſe characters are unknown. It is neceſſary, ſays Cæſar, rather to execute than to deliberate upon bold enterpriſes. However, theſe great characters are more frequent than great geniuſes. A ſtrong paſſion is ſufficient to form a great character, but it is only one means of acquiring a great genius. Thus, among three or four hundred miniſters, or kings, we commonly find one great character; while we are not always ſure of finding one great genius among two or three thouſand, that is ſuppoſing, that ſuch a genius as that of Minos, Confucius, and Lycurgus, &c. are only proper for forming legiſlators.

(k) The opinion I advance muſt appear very pleaſing to the vanity of the greateſt part of mankind, and, therefore, ought to meet with a favourable reception. According to my principles, they ought not to attribute the inferiority of their abilities to the humbling cauſe of a leſs perfect organization, but to the education they have received, as well as to the circumſtances in which they have been placed. Every man of moderate abilities, in conformity with my principles, has a right to think, that if he had been more favoured by fortune, if he had been born in a certain age or country, he had himſelf been like the great men whoſe genius he is forced to admire. Yet, however favourable this opinion may be to the mean abilities of the greateſt part of mankind, it muſt generally diſpleaſe; becauſe, there is ſcarcely a man who thinks he has only moderate abilities, and that he has any degree of ſtupidity, ſince he every day with great pleaſure thanks nature for the particular care ſhe has taken of his organization. Conſequently, there is ſcarcely a man who will not treat as a paradox, principles that openly ſhock his pretenſions. Every truth, which ſhocks pride, muſt for a long time wreſtle with that paſſion, before it can triumph over it. People are juſt only when they have an intereſt in being ſo. If the citizen exaggerates leſs the advantages of birth than the man of quality, if he makes a truer eſtimate of its real value, it is not becauſe he is wiſer; his inferiors have too often reaſon to complain of his being guilty of that ridiculous haughtineſs for which he abuſes the great: the juſtneſs of his judgment is then only the effect of his vanity; ſince, in this caſe, it is his intereſt to be on the ſide of reaſon. I will farther add to what I have ſaid, that the principles above eſtabliſhed, ſuppoſing them to be true, will ſtill meet with oppoſition from all who cannot admit them without abandoning ancient prejudices. When we are arrived at

ſuch a concurrence of circumſtances as are proper to unfold the buds of genius and virtue. A love of paradoxes has not led me to form this concluſion; but the deſire of promoting the happineſs of mankind. I am convinced that a good education would diffuſe light, virtue, and, conſequently, happineſs, in ſociety; and that the opinion, that genius and virtue are merely gifts of nature, is a great obſtacle to the making any farther progreſs in the ſcience of education, and in this reſpect is the great favourer of idleneſs and negligence. With this view, examining the effects which nature and education may have upon us, I have perceived that education makes us what we are; in conſequence of which I have thought that it was the duty of a citizen to make known a truth proper to awaken the attention, with reſpect to the means of carrying this education to perfection. And to caſt the greater light on ſo important a ſubject, I ſhall endeavour in the following diſcourſe, to fix, in a preciſe manner, the ideas we ought to form on the different faculties of the human mind.

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at a certain age, lazineſs exaſperates us againſt every new idea that impoſes upon us the fatigue of examination. A new opinion finds partizans only among thoſe men of genius, who being ſtill too young to have wedded themſelves to their ideas, or to have felt the ſting of envy, greedily ſeize the truth where ever they find it. They alone, as I have already obſerved, render themſelves witneſſes in behalf of the truth, introduce it, preſent it, and eſtabliſh it in the world; from them alone a philoſopher may expect ſome praiſe: moſt of the other men are corrupted by lazineſs or envy.

ESSAY

ESSAY. IV.

Of the different Faculties of the Human Mind *.

CHAP. I.

Of Genius.

AMONG the many authors who have have written on genius, moſt of them have conſidered it as a fire, an inſpiration, and a divine enthuſiaſm; and theſe metaphors they have taken for definitions.

But however vague theſe kind of definitions may be, the ſame reaſon that makes us ſay that fire is hot, and induces us to place in the number of its properties the effect it has upon us, has made us give the name of fire to all the ideas proper to kindle and move our paſſions.

Few men have perceived, that theſe metaphors, which are applicable to certain kinds of genius, ſuch as that of poetry or eloquence, are not ſo to the genius of reflection, ſuch as that of Locke and Newton.

In order to obtain an exact definition of the word genius, and in general, of all the names given to the mental faculties, we muſt obtain more general ideas; and, for this purpoſe, liſten with great attention to the judgments formed by the public.

The public equally places in the rank of men of genius, Deſcartes, Newton, Locke, Monteſquieu, Corneille, Moliere, &c. The name of genius given to ſuch different men, ſuppoſes therefore, a common quality, which characterizes what is called genius.

In order to know what this quality is, let us conſider the etymology of the word genius, ſince it is commonly by theſe etymologies, that the public moſt clearly ſhew the idea they fix to words.

That of genius is derived from GIGNERE, GIGNO; I bring forth, I produce; it always ſuppoſes invention, and this quality, is the only one which belongs to all the different kinds of genius.

Inventions and diſcoveries are of two kinds. The one which we owe to chance, ſuch as thoſe of the mariners compaſs, gunpowder, and in general almoſt all the diſcoveries we have made in the arts.

The other which we owe to genius: and here we ought to underſtand by the word diſcovery, a new combination, or a new relation perceived between

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* The ſubject of this diſcourſe as expreſſed by our author is, "The different "names given to the Eſprit," a word, which cannot be literally tranſlated, and ſignifies not only the mind, but its faculties.

certain objects, or ideas. A perſon obtains the title of a man of genius, if the ideas which reſult from this combination form one grand whole, are fruitful in truths, and are of importance with reſpect to mankind (a). Now the ſubjects which employ our reflections generally proceed from chance. This has a greater ſhare than we imagine in the ſucceſs of great men, ſince it furniſhes the more or leſs intereſting ſubjects upon which they treat; and it is the ſame chance that has cauſed them to be born at a time, when theſe great men were capable of improving their abilities.

It muſt be obſerved, that every inventor of an art or ſcience, which he draws in a manner from its cradle, is always ſurpaſſed by the man of genius, who follows him in the ſame ſtudy, and this ſecond by a third, and ſo on, till the art has made a certain progreſs. When it has arrived at the laſt degree of perfection; or, at leaſt to the degree neceſſary to render it conſidered as perfect among the people, then he who has given it its laſt degree, obtains the title of genius; though he may not have advanced the art in greater proportion, than thoſe who preceded him: The having a genius therefore, is not ſufficient to obtain a title to it.

From the tragedies on the paſſions to the poets Hardy and Rotrou, and till the Mariamne Triſtan, the French theatre ſucceſſively acquired many degrees of perfection. Corneille was born at a time, when the perfection he added to that art rendered it complete; Corneille is therefore a genius (b).

I by no means pretend by this obſervation, to diminiſh the glory of this great poet; but only to prove, that the law of continuity is always exactly obſerved, and that there are no breaks in nature (c). We may apply to the ſciences, the obſervation made on the drama.

Kepler diſcovered the laws by which bodies ought to gravitate towards each other; Newton, by the happy application of this to the heavenly bodies, which a very ingenious calculation enabled him to make, confirmed the exiſtence of theſe laws. Newton therefore, lived in a proper period, and was placed in the rank of men of genius.

(a) The novelty, and ſingularity of ideas, are not ſufficient to merit the title of genius; it is alſo neceſſary that theſe new ideas ſhould be beautiful, general, or extremely intereſting in theſe particulars, a work of genius principally differs from a mere original work, chiefly characterized by its ſingularity.

(b) Not but that tragedy was, in the time of Corneille, capable of new improvements: Racine has ſhewn, that they may be written with more elegance; Crebillon, that they may have more fire; and Voltaire has beyond all contradiction made it appear, that there might be introduced into them greater pomp and ſhew, if the ſtage, which is always crouded with ſpectators, did not oppoſe this kind of beauty, ſo well known to the Greeks.

(c) There are a thouſand ſources of illuſion of this kind. A man is perfectly acquainted with a foreign language, we will ſuppoſe the Spaniſh. If the Spaniſh writers are then ſuperior to us in the drama, the French author, who improves himſelf by reading their works, though he ſurpaſſes his model ever ſo little, muſt, to his ignorant fellow-countrymen, appear a very extraordinary man: and no doubt is made, but he has carried the art to that high degree of perfection, to which it would have been impoſſible for the human mind to have at firſt raiſed it.

Ariſtotle,

Ariſtotle, Gaſſendi, and Montaigne, had a confuſed view, that we owe all our ideas to our ſenſations: Locke cleared up, ſearched into this principle, and eſtabliſhed its truth by an infinite number of applications; and hence Locke is a genius.

It is impoſſible that one great man ſhould not have been preceded by another (d). Works of genius are like ſome of thoſe ſuperb monuments of antiquity, which executed by ſeveral generations of kings, bear the name of him who finiſhed them.

But if chance, that is, the chain of effects of whoſe cauſes we are ignorant, has ſuch a ſhare in the glory of men, who have rendered themſelves illuſtrious in arts and ſciences; if it determines the inſtant in which each ought to be born, in order to receive the name of a man of genius; has not this chance, ſtill greater influence on the reputation of ſtateſmen?

Cæſar and Mahomet have filled the earth with their renown. The latter is by half the globe reſpected as the friend of God; and in the other he is honoured as a great genius: however this Mahomet, a mere dealer in cattle in Arabia, without learning, without education, and himſelf in part the dupe of the fanaticiſm he inſpired, was forced, in order to compoſe the ridiculous work named the Koran, to have recourſe to ſome Greek monks. Now, how is it poſſible, not to acknowlege, that ſuch a man owed to chance his being placed in times and circumſtances proper to produce the revolution in which this bold adventurer did little more than lend his name.

Who doubts but this ſame chance, ſo favourable to Mahomet, did not contribute to the glory of Cæſar? I do not pretend to leſſen the praiſes due to that hero: but Sylla had, like him, humbled the Romans. The actions of war are no where ſo circumſtantially mentioned, as to enable us to judge, whether Cæſar was really ſuperior to Sertorius, or any other captain. If he was the only Roman who has been compared to the conqueror of Darius, it is becauſe both ſubdued many nations. If the glory of Cæſar has tarniſhed that of the great captains of the republic, it is becauſe his victories laid the foundations of the throne, which Auguſtus eſtabliſhed (e); becauſe his dictature was the period when the ſlavery of the Romans began; and becauſe he produced a revolution

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(d) I may even ſay accompanied by ſome great men. Whoever is pleaſed to conſider the human mind, muſt ſee in every age, five or ſix men of abilities, who apply themſelves to the diſcoveries made by a man of genius. If the honour remains in the poſſeſſion of the laſt, it is becauſe this diſcovery under his management is more fruitful, than in that of others; becauſe he conveys his ideas with more ſtrength and clearneſs; and becauſe, in ſhort, we always ſee from the different manner in which men take an advantage of a principle or diſcovery, to whom that principle or diſcovery belongs.

(e) Not but that Cæſar was one of the greateſt generals, even according to the ſevere judgment Machiavel, who eraſes from the liſt of celebrated captains all thoſe who with ſmall armies have not executed great and new things.

"If to excite their enthuſiaſm, adds that "celebrated author, we ſee great poets "take Homer for a model, and when they "write, aſk themſelves, had Homer this "thought, how would he expreſs himſelf? So great generals, the admirers of "ſome great captain of antiquity, imitates "Scipio, and Ziſka, one of whom was "propoſed by Cyrus, and the other by Hannibal for a model."

in the world, of ſo aſtoniſhing a nature, that it muſt neceſſarily add to the fame he had merited by his great talents.

What part ſoever I give to chance, whatever ſhare it has in the reputation of great men, it however can do nothing for thoſe who are not animated by a lively deſire of glory.

This deſire, as I have already obſerved makes men ſupport, without pain, the fatigue of ſtudy and reflection. It endues a man with that conſtancy of attention, neceſſary to render him illuſtrious, in any art or ſcience whatſoever. To this deſire perſons owe that boldneſs of mind, which enables them to cite before the tribunal of reaſon, the opinions, prejudices, and errors, conſecrated by time.

It is this deſire alone, which, in the arts and ſciences raiſes us to the perception of new truths, or procures us new amuſements. This deſire, in ſhort, is the ſoul of the man of genius: it is the ſource of what appears ridiculous in him (f), and of his ſucceſs; a ſucceſs commonly owing to the obſtinacy with which he

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(f) Every man abſorbed in deep reflection, and employed about great and general ideas, lives in the forgetfulneſs of thoſe forms, and in the ignorance of thoſe cuſtoms, which compoſe the knowlege of a great part of the world; and thus almoſt conſtantly appears ridiculous. Few men perceive that the knowlege of little things, generally ſuppoſes the ignorance of thoſe that are great; that every man who lives like the reſt of the world, has no ideas but thoſe that are common to all; that ſuch a man cannot raiſe himſelf above the abilities of the common people; and that, in ſhort, genius always ſuppoſes a man to have a lively deſire of glory, which rendering him inſenſible to all other deſires, opens his mind only to the love of knowlege.

Anaxagoras is an example of this. Being preſſed by his friends to place his affairs in order, and for that purpoſe to employ ſome hours of his time, "O my friends, "he replied, you aſk what is impoſſible. "How can I divide my time between my "affairs, and my ſtudies, when I perſer "one drop of wiſdom, to whole tuns of "riches?"

Corneille was doubtleſs of the ſame opinion, when a young man, to whom he had promiſed his daughter, and whoſe affairs put him under the neceſſity of breaking off the marriage, went in the morning to Corneille, and without ceremony entered his cloſet: "I come, ſaid he, Sir, to retract "my promiſe, and to give you the motives "of my conduct. —— Why, Sir, replied "Corneille, could not you, without inter-"rupting me, talk of all that to my wife? "Go up to her: I underſtand nothing at "all of theſe affairs."

There is ſcarely a man of genius, of whom ſome ſuch circumſtance might not be mentioned. A domeſtic enters in a fright the cloſet of the learned Budeus, and tells him, the houſe is on fire: "Well, "ſays he, inform my wife of it. I do not "interfere in houſhold affairs."

A taſte for ſtudy ſuffers no diſtraction. It is to the retreat to which, this taſte confines illuſtrious men, that they owe that ſimplicity of manners, and thoſe ſimple unexpected anſwers, which ſo often furniſh men of moderate abilities with the pretence of ridiculing men of genius. I ſhall upon this ſubject mention two paſſages of the celebrated la Fountaine. One of his friends, who had doubtleſs his converſion much at heart, lent him one day the epiſtles of St. Paul. La Fontaine read them with avidity, but being naturally of a mild and humane diſpoſition, he was ſhocked at the ſeeming ſeverity of that apoſtle's writings, and ſhutting the book, returned it to his friend, ſaying, "I "reſtore you your book: this St. Paul is "not a man after my mind." It was with the ſame ſimplicity, that one day comparing St. Auguſtin to Rabelais, "How, cried "la Fountaine, can men of taſte prefer "the reading of St. Auguſtin to that of "Rabelais, ſo ſprightly and ſo amuſing?"

Every

he concenters himſelf in one kind of ſtudy. One ſcience is ſufficient to fill the the whole capacity of one mind; it therefore, neither has nor can have an univerſal genius.

The length of the reflections neceſſary to render a perſon ſuperior in one kind of ſtudy, compared with the ſhortneſs of life, ſhews us the impoſſibility of excelling in many.

Beſides, there is only one age, namely that of the paſſions, in which we can conquer the firſt difficulties that forbid acceſs to each ſcience. This age being paſt, we may learn ſtill to manage with more dexterity, the inſtruments we have always made uſe of, the better to unfold our ideas, and to preſent them to public view: but we are incapable of the neceſſary efforts for clearing a freſh ſoil.

Genius, of whatever kind, is always the effect of an infinite number of combinations, that can only be formed in early youth.

Moreover, by genius, I do not merely underſtand the diſcoveries made in the ſciences or the invention, with reſpect to the matter and plan of the work, there is alſo a genius of expreſſion. The principles of the art of writing are ſo obſcure, ſo few, and imperfect, that no one can obtain the title of being a celebrated writer, without being really an inventor.

La Fontaine and Boileau have employed but little invention, in relation to the ſubjects of which they have treated: yet both of them have been juſtly eſteemed men of genius; the firſt, from the ſimplicity and agreeable manner in which he has formed his narrations; the laſt, from the correctneſs, ſtrength, and poetic ſtyle, which runs through his works. Whatever reproaches are caſt on Boileau, we are forced to confeſs, that by infinitely improving the art of verſification, he has really merited the title of an inventor.

Among the different kinds of genius to which people apply themſelves, ſome are more deſirable than others. In poetry, for inſtance, the genius of expreſſion is, if I may uſe the term, the genius of neceſſity. The epic poet, the moſt rich in the invention of a ſubject, is not read if he is void of the genius of expreſſion; on the contrary, a poem, where the verſification is good, and the piece abounds with poetic beauties, though otherwiſe without invention, will always meet with a favourable reception from the public.

This is not the caſe with philoſophical works: in theſe, the firſt merit is that of the ſubject. In order to inſtruct mankind, it is neceſſary to preſent to them a new truth, or to ſhew them the connection that ſubſiſts between truths, that appear ſeparate. In works of inſtruction, the beauty and eloquence of the diction, and an agreeable arrangement form only a ſecondary merit. Thus among the moderns we have ſeen philoſophers without ſtrength, grace, and even clearneſs of expreſſion, obtain great reputation. The obſcurity of their writings, may, for ſome time, condemn them to oblivion; but at length they riſe from it: there, ſooner or later, appears a penetrating mind, which ſeizing the

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Every man who is concentered in the ſtudy of intereſting objects, finds himſelf alone in the midſt of the world, he always acts like himſelf, and ſcarcely ever like any body elſe; conſequently, he muſt almoſt always appear ridiculous.

truths

truths contained in their works, frees them from the obſcurity with which they are covered, and clearly explains them. A genius like this, ſhares with the inventors the merit and glory of their diſcoveries. He is a labourer, who digs up a treaſure, and divides with the proprietor of the land, the riches he finds buried there.

After what I have ſaid of the invention required in the ſubject, and of the genius of expreſſion, it is eaſy to explain, how a celebrated writer may compoſe a bad work: it is ſufficient, that the genius with which he writes, ſhould be only a ſecondary one. For this reaſon, a celebrated poet may be a bad philoſopher, and a good philoſopher, a bad poet; a writer of a romance may be a bad hiſtorian, and an excellent hiſtorian compoſe a bad romance.

The concluſion of this chapter is, that though genius always ſuppoſes invention, all invention, however, does not ſuppoſe genius. In order to obtain the the title of a man of genius, it is neceſſary, that his invention ſhould be employed about objects that are general and important; and that he ſhould be born at a time, when, by his talents and diſcoveries, he may make a figure in the learned world, by carrying to perfection the arts and ſciences.

The man of genius, is then, in part, the work of chance; it is chance which, always in action, prepares the diſcoveries, inſenſibly brings truths together, that are always uſeleſs when too far ſeparated, and which gives birth to the man of genius, at the very inſtant, when the truths, already brought together, afford him general and clear principles: genius ſeizes theſe, preſents them to the public, and ſome part of the empire of the arts and ſciences is enlightened.

Chance then diſcharges, with reſpect to genius, the office of thoſe winds, which, diſperſed at the four corners of the earth, there charge themſelves with the inflammable matter that compoſe the meteors: this matter diſperſed looſely through the air, produces no effect, till the moment, when, by contrary winds, its particles impetuouſly claſh againſt each other; then the lightning kindles its flaſhes faſt through the air, and the horizon is in a blaze.

CHAP. II.

Of Imagination and Sentiment.

MOST of thoſe, who have hitherto treated of the imagination, have too much confined and reſtrained the ſignification of the word. To obtain a clear idea of this term, let us conſider its etymology; it is derived from the Latin IMAGO, image.

Many have confounded the memory and the imagination. They have not perceived, that there are no words exactly ſynonimous; that the memory conſiſts in a diſtinct remembrance of the object preſented to us, and the imagination in a combination, a new aſſemblage of images, and proper relations perceived between theſe images, and the ſenſations they would excite. If this be terror, the imagination gives being to the ſphinx and to the furies. If this be aſtoniſh-

ment

ment or admiration, it creates the garden of the Heſperides, the enchanted iſland of Armida, and the palace of Atalanta.

Imagination is then the invention with reſpect to images (a), as genius is wit hreſpect to ideas.

The memory, which is only the exact remembrance of the objects preſented to us, differs no leſs from the imagination, than a portrait of Louis XIV. done by le Brun, differs from a picture of the conqueſt of Franche Comte (b).

It follows from this definition of the imagination, that it is employed ſcarcely about any thing elſe, but in deſcriptions, pictures, and decorations. In all other caſes, the imagination can only ſerve to cloke the ideas and ſentiments we repreſent. It formerly played a much greater part in the world; it explained almoſt all the phænomena of nature. It was from the urn on which a naiad reſted that the rivers flowed, which winded along the vallies; the foreſts and plains were covered with verdure, by the care of the napeæ and the dryades; the rocks torn from the mountains, were rolled into the plains by the orcades; the powers of the air, under the name of genii, or demons, unchained the winds, and let looſe the ſtorms on the countries they would ravage.

Though in Europe, people no longer explain the phænomena of nature, by the imagination; though they make no other uſe of it, than to give a greater clearneſs and beauty to the principles of the ſciences, and though they expect to diſcover the ſecrets of nature only by experiments, we muſt not imagine that all nations, are equally enlightened in this reſpect. Imagination is ſtill the philoſophy of India: it is ſhe, who, in Tonquin, has fixed the inſtant of the formation of pearls (c): it is ſhe, who by peopling the elements with demi-gods,

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(a) We give the title of a man of a lively imagination, to him who expreſſes his ideas by ſtrong images. It is true, in converſation we generally confound imagination with invention and paſſion. It is however, eaſy to diſtinguiſh the man of warm paſſions, from the man of a ſtrong and lively imagination, ſince it almoſt always proceeds from the want of imagination that a poet who excells in tragedy or comedy, ſo often makes but a very indifferent figure in an epic or lyric poem.

(b) It muſt be remembered that Louis XIV. is painted in this picture.

(c) Imagination, ſupported by ſome obſcure and ridiculous traditions, teaches in relation to this ſubject, that a king of Tonquin, a great magician, had formed a bow of pure gold, and that all the arrows ſhot from it carried death. Armed with this bow he routed an army. A neighbouring king attacked him with more numerous forces: he experienced his power, and was defeated; he concluded a treaty, and obtained for his ſon the daughter of the conqueror. Amidſt the intoxication of the firſt night, the bridegroom conjured his ſpouſe to ſubſtitute in the room of her father's magic bow, another perfectly like it. This the imprudence of love promiſed; ſhe executed her promiſe, and did not ſuſpect her being guilty of a crime. But ſcarce was the ſon-in-law armed with the wonderful bow, when he marched againſt his father-in-law, defeated him, and forced him to fly with his daughter to the ſea coaſt. There a demon appeared to the king of Tonquin, and let him know the author of his misfortune. The father enraged, ſeized his daughter, and drew his ſcimeter: ſhe in vain proteſted her innocence, ſhe found him inflexible. She then foretold, that all the drops of her blood ſhould be changed into pearls, whoſe whiteneſs ſhould render future ages a witneſs of her imprudence, and her innocence. She was ſilent, the father ſtruck; the metamorphoſis began; and the coaſt, ſtained with this paricide, is ſtill that where they fiſh for the fineſt pearls.

creating

creating at her pleaſure demons, genii, fairies, and inchanters, in order to explain the phænomena of the natural world, has, with a bold wing, often raiſed herſelf to its origin. After having long run over the immeaſurable deſarts of ſpace, and of eternity, ſhe is at length forced to ſtop at a point; at this point time begins. The dark, thick, and ſpiritual air, which according to the Taautus of the Phœnicians, covered the vaſt abyſs, is filled with love for its own principles; love produces a mixture, and this mixture receives the name of deſire; this deſire conceives the aqueous corruption; this corruption contains the ſeed of the univerſe, and of all living creatures. Intelligent animals, under the name of Zophaſemin, or the contemplators of the heavens, received their being: the ſun was kindled, the earth and ſeas were warmed with its rays; they reflected them, and enflamed the air: the winds blew, the clouds aroſe, ſtruck againſt each other, and from their ſhock proceeded thunder and lightening; the noiſe awakened the intelligent animals, who afrighted, began to move, and fled, ſome into the caverns of the earth, and others into the abyſs of the ocean.

The ſame imagination, which joined to the principles of a falſe philoſophy, had in Phœnicia thus deſcribed the formation of the univerſe, in ſeveral other countries brought chaos into order, by a thouſand different ways (d).

In Greece, it inſpired Heſiod, who, when full of his enthuſiaſm, ſaid, "In "the beginning were Chaos, black Erebus, and Tartarus. Time did not yet "exiſt, when eternal night, which, on heavy and extended wings, roved through

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(d) They aſſert in the kingdom of Lao, that heaven and earth ſubſiſted from all eternity. According to them, ſixteen terreſtrial worlds are ſubject to ours, and the moſt elevated are the moſt delightful. A flame ſent forth, every thirty-ſix thouſand years, from the abyſs of the firmament, ſurrounds the earth, as the bark of a tree incompaſſes the trunk and reſolves it into water. Nature, for ſome moments reduced to this ſtate, is revived by a genius of the firſt heaven. He deſcends on the wings of the winds, their breath makes the waters retire; the moiſt earth is dried; the foreſts and plains are covered with verdure, and the earth reſumes its primeval form.

At the laſt conflagration, which, the inhabitants of Lao, ſay, preceeded the age of Xaca, a mandarin named Ponta-bobamy-ſuan, caſt himſelf upon the ſurface of the waters: a flower ſwam on their immenſity; the mandarin perceived it, and cut it with his ſcimeter. By a ſudden metamorphoſis, the flower cut from its ſtalk, changed into a virgin; nature had never produced any thing ſo beautiful. The mandarin conceived the moſt violent paſſion for her, and made known his tenderneſs. The love of virginity rendered the maid inſenſible to the tears of her lover. The mandarin admired her virtue; but not being able to deprive himſelf of her ſight, placed himſelf at ſome diſtance from her, where reciprocally darting ardent glances at each other, they had ſuch an effect, that the maid conceived, and brought forth without loſing her virginity. To provide nouriſhment for the new inhabitants of the earth, the mandarin cauſed the waters to retire; he excavated the vallies, raiſed the mountains, and lived among mankind, till at length leaving the earth, he flew towards heaven: but the gates were ſhut againſt him, and not opened till he had endured a long and ſevere penance on earth. Such is the poetic picture, given in the kingdom of Lao, of the generation of beings; a picture that is varied by different nations, ſo as to be more or leſs grand or fantaſtical, but it is always formed by the imagination.

"the

" the immenſe plains of ſpace ſuddenly ſtopped at Erebus: ſhe there depo-
" ſited an egg: Erebus received it into her boſom, hatched it, and Love
" ſprang from thence. He aroſe on his golden wing, united himſelf to Chaos:
" and this union gave being to the heavens, to the earth, to the immortal gods,
" to men, and to animals. Already Venus, conceived in the ſea, aroſe on the
" ſurface of the waters; all animated bodies ſtopped to contemplate her; the
" emotions which Love had impreſſed on all nature, were then directed towards
" beauty. Now order, regularity, and deſign were firſt known in the uni-
" verſe."

Thus in the firſt ages of Greece imagination built the palace of the world. Now more wiſe in her conceptions, ſhe ſuffers us to arrive at the knowledge of its foundation by the information of hiſtory. Inſtructed by an infinite number of errors, ſhe no longer interferes in the explication of the phænomena of nature; but, in conſequence of experiments, ſhe applies herſelf only to deſcriptions and pictures.

It is there that ſhe creates thoſe beings, and thoſe new ſcenes which poetry by its turns, the magnificence of its expreſſions, and propriety of words, render viſible to the eyes of the reader.

Are bold paintings required? Imagination is ſenſible that the grandeſt pictures, ſhould they be incorrect, are even the moſt proper to make an impreſſion; that people prefer to the mild and pure light of the lamps burning before the altars, the mingled exploſions of fire, aſhes, and ſmoke, darted from mount Ætna.

Is a voluptuous picture required? Imagination conducts Adonis into the midſt of a grove: he there ſees Venus ſleeping on a bed of roſes; the goddeſs awakes; the bluſh of modeſty covers her cheeks; a ſlight robe conceals a part of her beauties; the ardent Adonis is enraptured with the ſight; he ſeizes the goddeſs; he triumphs over her reſiſtance; the veil is ſnatched with an impatient hand, Venus is naked, the alabaſter of her body is expoſed to the eye of deſire: and here the picture remains looſely terminated, leaving to caprice, and the varied fancies of love, the choice of attitudes and careſſes.

Is it neceſſary to repreſent a ſimple fact under a ſhining image? to ſhew, for inſtance, the diſſentions among the citizens? Imagination will repreſent Peace leaving the city in tears, with the olive hanging withered over her eyes. Thus in poetry, imagination ſhows how to repreſent every thing by ſhort images, or allegories, which are properly only continued metaphors.

In philoſophy, the uſe that may be made of the imagination is infinitely more limited: it there ſerves only, as I have ſaid above, to throw a clearer and more agreeable light on principles. I ſay a clearer; becauſe men who underſtand very well what they mean, when they pronounce the words that repreſent ſenſible objects, as an *oak*, the *ocean*, the *ſun*, do not underſtand the meaning of the terms *beauty*, *juſtice*, *virtue*, whoſe ſignification includes a great number of ideas. It is almoſt impoſſible for them to affix the ſame complex ideas to the ſame word, and hence ariſes the eternal and hot diſputes, that have ſo often ſtained the earth with blood.

The imagination, which endeavours to clothe abſtract ideas, and the principles of the ſciences, with ſenſible images, gives therefore clearneſs and charms to philoſophy.

It equally embelliſhes works of ſentiment. When Arioſto conducts Rolando into the grotto, whither Angelica is to repair, with what art does he adorn it? On every ſide are inſcriptions engraved by love, beds of turf prepared by pleaſure; the murmur of rivulets, the freſhneſs of the air, the perfume of flowers, are all united to excite the deſires of Rolando. The poet knew that the more this grotto was embelliſhed, the more pleaſure it promiſed, and the ſweeter delight it infuſed into the ſoul of the hero, the more violent would be his deſpair, when he ſhould learn the falſhood of Angelica; and the more would this picture raiſe in the minds of his readers thoſe tender emotions, to which their pleaſures are attached.

I ſhall conclude this piece on the imagination with an oriental fable, which is perhaps in ſome reſpects incorrect, but very ingenious, and extremely fitted to prove how much the imagination may ſometimes add charms to a ſentiment. It is a fortunate lover, who, under the veil of an allegory, ingeniouſly attributes to his miſtreſs the love he has offered her, and the perfections he admires.

" I was one day in the bath: an odoriferous earth, an animated hand paſſed into " mine. I asked, art thou musk? art thou amber? It replied, I am but com- " mon earth, but I have had ſome connexion with a roſe; its beneficent virtue " has penetrated me; without that I ſhould ſtill be only common earth (e)."

I have, I think, clearly determined what we ought to underſtand by imagination, and ſhewn ſeveral ways the uſe that may be made of it. I now paſs to ſentiment.

The moment when paſſion is awaked with the greateſt ſtrength, the ſtrong feelings which it excites in us are called ſentiments. Thus we underſtand by paſſion only a continuity of mental feeling, or ſentiments. A man's paſſion for a woman, is only the duration of his deſires, and ſentiments, with reſpect to her.

This definition being given in order to diſtinguiſh the different ideas affixed to the word ſentiment, it muſt be obſerved that it is frequently uſed in an indeterminate ſenſe, and often confounded with ſenſation: we muſt recollect that there are appetites and paſſions; the firſt are immediately given by nature, theſe are hunger, thirſt, &c. the others not being immediately given by nature, ſuppoſe the eſtabliſhment of ſociety, as ambition, pride, the love of luxury, &c. hence I diſtinguiſh two kind of ſentiments. One of which has a relation to the natural wants, and are termed ſenſations; the other to the paſſions, and are particularly called ſentiments. It is of the laſt ſpecies, that I ſpeak in this chapter.

In order to form a clear idea of this ſubject, it muſt be obſerved that there are no men without deſires, and conſequently without ſentiments; theſe ſentiments are either weak or lively. When they are only weak, we ſhall conſider them as not having any at all. We allow ſentiments only to thoſe who are ſtrongly affected. If we are affrighted, if our fear does not precipitate us into greater dangers than thoſe we would avoid, and allows us the full uſe of our reaſon, we can never be charged with being fearful men. What I ſay of the ſentiment of fear, I alſo ſay of that of love and ambition.

It is only to the paſſions, that man owes thoſe lively emotions and tranſports, to which we give the name of ſentiments.

(e) See the Guliſtan, or the Empire of Roſes, by Saadi.

We

We are animated by theſe paſſions, when a ſingle deſire governs the mind, and imperiouſly commands all the ſubordinate deſires. Whoever yields ſucceſſively to different deſires, deceives himſelf if he thinks he is poſſeſſed with ſtrong paſſions: he miſtakes inclinations for paſſions.

The deſpotic power, if I may be allowed the term, of a deſire to which all the others are ſubordinate, is therefore in us what characterizes paſſion. There are, conſequently, but few men of ſtrong paſſions, and but few capable of lively ſentiments.

Frequently the manners of a people, and the conſtitution of a ſtate, oppoſe the expanding of the paſſions and ſentiments. How many countries are there, where certain paſſions cannot ſhew themſelves, at leaſt, by actions! In an arbitrary government, always ſubject to a thouſand revolutions, the great are almoſt conſtantly ſcorched by the fire of ambition; but this is not the caſe in a monarchy, where the laws are put in force. In ſuch a ſtate the ambitious are chained, and we ſee none but the intriguing, to whom I do not give the title of ambitious. Not but in theſe countries there are an infinite number of people who have the ſeeds of ambition; but, except in ſome ſingular circumſtances, they die away, without ever ſhooting forth. Ambition in theſe men, is like thoſe ſubterraneous fires kindled in the bowels of the earth, where they burn without exploſion, till the moment when the waters penetrate to them, where being rarified by the fire, they riſe, burſt open the mountains, and ſhake the foundations of the earth.

In countries where the ſeeds of certain paſſions and ſentiments are choaked, the public can only know and ſtudy them by pictures exhibited by celebrated writers, and principally the poets.

Sentiment is the ſoul of poetry, and above all of the drama. Having marked out the ſigns by which great painters, and men of lively ſentiments, may underſtand the paſſions, it is proper to obſerve, that neither theſe, nor the ſentiments, can ever be well painted by thoſe who have never felt them. If they place a hero in a ſituation proper for his ſhewing all the force of the paſſions, in order to draw a true picture, they themſelves muſt be affected with the ſame ſentiments whoſe effects they deſcribe, and draw the model from their own hearts. If they are without paſſions, they can never ſeize the preciſe point which a ſentiment attains, and never ſurmounts (f): they always fall ſhort, or go beyond nature.

Beſides, in order to ſucceed here, it is not ſufficient to be in general ſuſceptible of the paſſions, they muſt alſo be animated by that which they paint. One kind of ſentiment does not make us divine another, and we always expreſs that but poorly, which we feel but weakly. Corneille, whoſe ſoul was more elevated than tender, paints great politicians and heroes better than lovers.

It is principally to truth, that painters of the paſſions and ſentiments owe their fame. I know, however, that happy ſituations, noble maxims, and elegant

(f) In theatrical works, nothing is more common than to expreſs the ſentiment with ſpirit. Would they paint virtue, they make the hero perform actions which ſurpaſs his motives. There are few dramatic poets free from this fault.

verſe, have ſometimes obtained great ſucceſs on the ſtage; but whatever merit there is in this ſucceſs, it is in the drama only a ſecondary merit.

The verſes in which the character is expreſſed in tragedies, make the greateſt impreſſion upon us. Who is not ſtruck with that ſcene, where Catiline anſwers the reproach of being an aſſaſſin, made him by Lentulus:

Crois que ces crimes
Sont de ma politique, & non pas de mon cœur:
. . . . . .
Forcé de ſe plier aux mœurs de ſes complices.

Believe that theſe crimes
Proceed from policy, and not my heart:
Forced to yield to the manners of my accomplices.

It is neceſſary, he adds, that the chief of a conſpiracy ſhould ſucceſſively aſſume all characters. If I had only ſuch as Lentulus in my party,

Et s'il n'étoit rempli que d'hommes vertueux,
Je n'aurois pas de peine à l'être encor plus que'eux.

And was it only filled with virtuous men,
I ſhould find no pain in ſurpaſſing them.

What a character is included in theſe two laſt lines! What a chief of a conſpiracy, is a man ſo much maſter of himſelf, as to be according to his choice either virtuous or vicious! What an ambition is that, which, in ſpite of the uſual inflexibility of the paſſions, can make the proud Catiline ſtoop to aſſume all characters! Such an ambition proclaims the deſtroyer of Rome.

Such verſes are always inſpired by the paſſions. He who is not ſuſceptible of them, ought to renounce all attempts to paint them. But it is asked, by what marks ſhall the public, who are often but little capable of judging of what falls ſhort, or exceeds nature, know the great painters of the ſentiments? By the manner, I reply, in which they expreſs them. By means of reflection and memory, a man of genius may form a good judgment of what a lover ought to do or ſay in a particular ſituation; he may ſubſtitute the expreſſion of the ſentiment, for the ſentiment itſelf: but he is in the ſituation of a painter, who in the deſcription of the beauty and form of a woman, might draw her portrait; and might perhaps make a fine picture; but not a true reſemblance. Mere genius can never divine the language of the heart.

Nothing can be more inſipid to an old man, than the converſation of two lovers. The man inſenſible, but witty, is the caſe of the old man; the ſimple language of the heart appears to him flat; he ſeeks, in ſpite of himſelf, to raiſe it by ſome ingenious ſtrokes, which always diſcover, that he does not feel what he deſcribes.

When Peleus braves the wrath of heaven, when the burſts of thunder proclaim the preſence of the God, his rival, and Thetis, ſtruck with fear, in order to calm the ſuſpicions of her jealous lover, ſays:

Va,

Va, fuis ; te montrer que je crains,
C'eſt te dire aſſez que je t'aime (g) *:*

Go, fly ; and let my tender fears impart,
The trembling apprehenſions of my heart :

we perceive that the danger in which Peleus found himſelf was too ſudden, for Thetis to be in ſo tranquil a ſituation, as to give this ingenious turn to her anſwer. Terrified at the approach of a God, who, with a ſingle word, could reduce the lover to nothing, and preſſed with the eager deſire of ſeeing him gone, ſhe had properly only time to cry, Fly, I adore thee.

Every phraſe ingeniouſly turned, is at the ſame time a proof of wit, and a want of ſentiment. The man intirely agitated by a paſſion which he ſtrongly feels, does not trouble himſelf about the manner in which he expreſſes it ; the moſt ſimple is that which firſt occurs.

When Cupid, weeping at the knees of Venus, asks her to grant him Pſyche, and the goddeſs laughs at his grief, Cupid ſays :

Je ne me plaindrois pas, ſi je pouvois mourir.

I ſhould not complain, were it poſſible to die.

When Titus declares to Berenice, that the Deſtinies have ordained that they ſhould be ſeparated for ever (h), Berenice anſwers :

Pour jamais ! —— que ce mot eſt affreux quand on aime !

For ever ! —— A word how frightful when we love !

When Palmira ſays to Seide, that in vain ſhe attempted by her prayers to move her raviſher, Seide replies :

(g) If in this verſe of Ovid ;

Pignora certa petis, do pignora certa timendo,

the ſun ſays nearly the ſame thing to Phaeton ; it is becauſe Phaeton is not yet mounted in his chariot, and conſequently is not in the moment of danger.

(h) In the Engliſh tragedy of Cleopatra, Octavia rejoins Antony : and it is natural that Antony ſhould find his love revive for her : this Cleopatra fearing, Antony comforts her : " The difference," ſays he to her, " between Octavia and Cleopatra ! " " Oh, my lord," replies ſhe, " a much " greater difference between my condition " and hers : if Octavia be ſlighted at pre- " ſent, ſtill Octavia is thy wife ; a never " dying hope dwells in her ſoul, drys her " tears, and comforts her in misfortune. " To-morrow Hymen may place thee again " in her arms. But what is my deſtiny ! A " moment's ſuſpenſion of love in thy heart, " and all my hopes are fled. She can ſigh, " and fawn on the beloved object, hope to " move him, flatter herſelf with a return " of love —— I cannot —— one ſingle in- " ſtant of indifference, and there's an end " of all to me ; immenſe ſpace and eter- " nity will for ever ſeperate me from thy " love."

Quel

Quel eſt donc ce mortel inſenſible à tes larmes ?

What is then this mortal inſenſible to thy tears ?

Theſe verſes, and in general, all thoſe expreſſive of the ſentiments are ſimple, both in the turn and the expreſſion. But wit, void of ſentiments, would always lead us far from this ſimplicity, and even ſometimes turn a ſentiment into a maxim.

How may we prevent ourſelves from being in this reſpect the dupe of wit ? It is the buſineſs of wit to obſerve, to generalize obſervations, and to draw from them concluſions or maxims. Accuſtomed to this progreſs, it is almoſt impoſſible for the man of genius who has never been in love, and would paint that paſſion, to avoid turning ſentiments into maxims. Thus Fontenelle has made one of his ſhepherds ſay :

L'on ne doit point aimer, lerſqu'on a le cœur tendre.

When we have a tender heart, we ought not to love.

An idea common to him with Quinault, who expreſſes himſelf very differently, when he makes Atys ſay :

Si j'aimois un jour, par malheur,
Je connois bien mon cœur,
Il ſeroit trop ſenſible.

If ever Cupid wounds my heart,
So well I know its tender part,
My ſure misfortune, it muſt prove,
And I ſhall loſe myſelf for love.

If Quinault has not turned the ſentiment of Atys into a maxim, it was becauſe he was ſenſible that a man warmly affected, does not amuſe himſelf with generalizing his ideas.

It is not in this reſpect with ambition as with love. Sentiments in ambition may be united with wit and reflection : the cauſe of this difference is produced by the different objects propoſed to theſe two paſſions.

A lover deſires the favours of her whom he loves. Now theſe favours are not granted to the ſublimity of his wit, but to the exceſs of his tenderneſs. The lover in tears and deſpairing at the feet of his miſtreſs, is the eloquence moſt proper to move her. This is the intoxication of the lover, by which he prepares and ſeizes thoſe moments of weakneſs, which puts the finiſhing ſtroke to his happineſs. Wit has no ſhare in the triumph : it is then a ſtranger to the ſentiment of love. Beſides, the exceſs of the lover's paſſion, promiſes to afford a thouſand pleaſures to the object beloved. It is not ſo with the ambitious ; for his ambition promiſes no pleaſure to his accomplices. If a throne be the object of his deſires, and in order to mount it, he muſt be ſupported by a power-

ful

ful party; in vain would he lay before the eyes of his partizans all the exceſs of his ambition, they would hear him with indifference; did he not aſſign to each the ſhare he was to have in the government, and prove how much it would be for their intereſt to raiſe him to his wiſhes.

The lover, in ſhort, depends only on the object beloved; a ſingle moment procures his felicity; reflection has no time to enter a heart, the more warmly agitated as it approaches nearer the attainment of its deſires. But the ambitious in order to execute his projects, has continual need of the aſſiſtance of all ſorts of men: and to make a proper uſe of them, he muſt know them: beſides, his ſucceſs depends on projects artfully managed, and long prepared. What abilities are required to concert and purſue them? The ſentiment of ambition is there neceſſarily connected with abilities and reflection.

The dramatic poet may then render faithfully the character of the ambitious, by ſometimes putting into his mouth thoſe ſententious verſes, which, that they may ſtrongly ſtrike the ſpectator, ought to be the reſult of a lively ſentiment and profound reflection. Such are thoſe verſes, where, to juſtify his audacity, Catiline ſays to Probus, who accuſes him with imprudence:

L'imprudence n'eſt pas dans la témérité,
Elle eſt dans un projet faux & mal concerté;
Mais, s'il eſt bien ſuivi, c'eſt un trait de prudence
Que d'aller quelquefois juſques à l'inſolence.
Et je ſais, pour dompter les plus imperieux,
Qu'il faut ſouvent moins d'art que de mépris pour eux.

Imprudence conſiſts not in raſhneſs,
But in falſe and ill-concerted projects;
If 'tis properly tim'd, 'tis a ſtroke of prudence
Sometimes even to proceed to inſolence.
I know to tame the moſt imperious,
Often requires leſs art than contempt.

What I have ſaid of ambition ſhews in what different doſes, if I may uſe the term, wit may be applied to the paſſions.

I ſhall conclude with this obſervation, that our manners, and the form of our government not permitting us to give ourſelves up to ſtrong paſſions, ſuch as ambition and revenge, our painters commonly employ themſelves in repreſenting the ſentiments of ſenſible men, as love, filial and paternal tenderneſs, which, for this reaſon, has almoſt taken intire poſſeſſion of the French theatre.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of Wit.

WIT is nothing but an aſſemblage of new ideas and combinations. Had we made in any one kind all the combinations poſſible, we could in that ſpecies carry no farther either our invention, or our wit; we might be learned, but we could not be witty. It is then evident, that if there were no diſcoveries to be made, all would be ſcience, and wit would be impoſſible: for we ſhould have aſcended up even to the firſt principles of things. Being once arrived at thoſe general and ſimple principles, the knowledge of the facts, that had raiſed us to them, would be no more than a frivolous ſcience, and all the libraries filled with theſe facts would become uſeleſs. We ſhould then poſſeſs all the materials of politics and legiſlation, that is, have extracted from all hiſtories the ſmall number of principles, which being proper to preſerve among mankind the greateſt equality poſſible, would one day give birth to the beſt form of government. It would be the ſame with natural philoſophy, and in general with all the ſciences.

Then the human underſtanding, ſcattered in a infinite number of works, would be concentered by an able hand in a ſmall volume of principles, nearly as the ſpirit of the flowers diffuſed through vaſt plains, are, by the art of chemiſtry, eaſily concentered in a bottle of eſſence.

The human mind, indeed, is in every ſcience very far from having arrived at the term here ſuppoſed, and I freely confeſs that we ſhall not ſoon be reduced to the ſad neceſſity of being only learned; and that, in ſhort, thanks to human ignorance, we ſhall long be permitted to have wit.

Wit then always ſuppoſes invention. But what difference, it is asked, is there between this kind of invention, and that which obtains for us the title of a genius? In order to diſcover this, let us conſult the public. In morality and in politics they, for inſtance, honour with the title of men of genius, both Machiavel, and the author of the Spirit of Laws; and give the title of men of great wit to Rochefaucault and la Bruyere. The only ſenſible difference between theſe two kinds of men is, that the firſt treat of the moſt important ſubjects, connect more truths together, and form a greater aſſemblage of them than the ſecond. Now the union of a greater number of truths, ſuppoſes a greater quantity of combinations, and conſequently a more uncommon perſon. Beſides, the public are fond of ſeeing all the conſequences that can be drawn from a principle: they ought then to reward with a ſuperior title, like that of genius, whoever procures them this advantage, by uniting an infinite number of truths under the ſame point of view. Such is in philoſophy, the ſenſible difference between genius and wit.

In the arts, people expreſs by the word talent, what in the ſciences is meant the word wit; or it ſeems that the difference is very ſmall.

Whoever

Whoever either models himſelf after the great men who have already preceded him in the ſame courſe, does not ſurpaſs them, or has not written a certain number of elegant pieces, has not made ſufficient efforts of mind, nor given ſufficient proofs of invention to merit the title of a genius. Conſequently we place in the liſt of men of talents or abilities Reynard, Vergier, Campiſtron, and Flechier; while we quote as men of genius Moliere, la Fontaine, Corneille, and Boſſuet. I ſhall even add on this ſubject, that people ſometimes refuſe to the author, the title they grant to the work. A tale, or a tragedy has great ſucceſs, and they ſay of theſe works that they are full of genius, without daring ſometimes to grant the title to the author. In order to obtain it, it is neceſſary to have, like Fontaine, in an infinite number of ſmall pieces, the value of a great work; or, like Corneille and Racine, have compoſed a certain number of excellent tragedies.

The epic poem is, in poetry, the only work, the extent of which ſuppoſes a degree of attention and invention, ſufficient to adorn a man with the title of a genius.

There remains two obſervations to be made before I conclude this chapter. The firſt is, that in the arts, people give the name of wit only to thoſe, who being without a genius, or talent of one kind, transfuſe into their works thoſe of another: ſuch are, for inſtance, the comedies of Fontenelle, which being deſtitute of the comic genius and talent, ſparkled with philoſophic beauties. The ſecond is, that invention belongs ſo neceſſarily to wit, that we have not hitherto, by any epithets applicable to a great wit, pointed out thoſe who have filled uſeful employments, that did not require invention. The ſame cuſtom, which gives the epithet of good to a judge, a receiver of the revenues (a), or an able arithmetician, permits us to apply the epithet of ſublime to the poet, the legiſlator, the geometrician, and the orator. Wit then always ſuppoſes invention. This invention, more elevated in genius, ſuppoſes a more extenſive view, and conſequently more of that conſtancy and boldneſs of character, which ſtrikes out new paths.

Such is the difference between genius and wit, and of the general idea we ought to affix to the latter.

This difference being eſtabliſhed, I ſhould obſerve, that we are forced, by a dearth of language, to take this word in a variety of acceptions, which are only diſtinguiſhed by the epithets prefixed to the word wit. Theſe epithets being always given by the reader, or the ſpectator, are conſtantly relative to the impreſſion made upon him by a certain kind of ideas.

If people have ſo often, and perhaps without ſucceſs, treated of this ſubject, it is from their not having conſidered wit under the ſame point of view; and from their having taken the epithets refined, maſculine, ſparkling, &c. joined to the word wit, for real and diſtinct qualities; and, in ſhort, from their not having conſidered theſe epithets as expreſſing the different effects upon us, and the various ſpecies of ideas, and different manners of conveying them. To diſperſe the

(a) I do not ſay that good judges, or good receivers of the revenue, have not wit; but only that they have it not in the quality of judges, or receivers; unleſs we confound the quality of judge, with that of the legiſlator.

darkneſs ſpread over this ſubject, I am going in the following chapters to endeavour to determine, in a clear manner, the different ideas that ought to be affixed to the epithets often united with the word wit.

CHAP. IV.

Of refined and ſtrong Wit *.

IN natural philoſophy, we give the epithet fine, or refined, to what we cannot perceive without ſome trouble. In morality, that is, in ideas and ſentiments, we alſo give the name of fine and refined, to what cannot be perceived without ſome efforts of the mind, and great attention.

The Miſer of Moliere, ſuſpects his valet of having robbed him, and not finding any thing in his pockets, ſays; "Give me what thou haſt ſtolen, with-"out ſearching." This ſpeech of Harpagon's is fine, it is ſtrongly characteriſtic of the miſer; but it was difficult to diſcover it there.

In the opera of Iſis, when the nymph Io, to ſooth the complaints of Hierax, asks him: "Are your rivals better treated than you?" Hierax replies:

Le mal de mes rivaux n'égale pas ma peine.
La douce illuſion d'une eſpérance vaine
Ne les fait point tomber du faîte du bonheur:
Aucun d'eux, comme moi, n'a perdu votre cœur:
Comme eux, à votre humeur ſévere
Je ne ſuis point accoutumé.
Quel tourment de ceſſer de plaire,
Lorſqu'on a fait l'eſſai du plaiſir d'être aimé!

Oh! what to mine, my rival's pain!
Like me, they have not hop'd in vain;
Like me, they have not loſt your love;
They no ſuch wretchedneſs can prove.
Your ſcorn they only yet have felt,
While I have hop'd your heart to melt.
Tormenting thought! no hopes of eaſe,
Tho' once belov'd, I ceaſe to pleaſe!

This ſentiment is nature; it is alſo fine; it is concealed in the bottom of the heart; and it required the eyes of a Quinault to perceive it there.

From ſenſations let us paſs to refined ideas. We underſtand by a *refined idea*, a *refined* conſequence drawn from a general idea (a). I ſay a conſequence; be-

* The title of this chapter is, *De l'eſprit fin, de l'eſprit fort.*

(a) Fontenelle's works furniſh a thouſand examples of this.

cauſe

cauſe an idea no ſooner becomes fruitful in truths, than it loſes the name of a refined idea, and is called a principle, or general idea. People ſay, the principles, and not the refined ideas of Ariſtotle, Locke, Newton, and Deſcartes. Not but that in order to aſcend like theſe philoſophers, from obſervations to obſervations, till we have acquired general ideas, requires great delicacy of mind, that is, much attention. This attention (let me be permitted to obſerve by the way), is a microſcope which enlarges objects, without deforming them, makes us perceive an infinite number of reſemblances and differences, inviſible to the eye that is not attentive. Wit of every kind, is properly no more than an effect of the attention.

But not to ramble from my ſubject, I ſhall obſerve, that every idea and every ſentiment, the diſcovery of which ſuppoſes that an author has great delicacy of thought, and much attention, will not receive the name of refined, if this ſentiment, or this idea, be exhibited upon the ſtage, or delivered in a ſimple and natural manner: for the public do not give the name of refined, to what they underſtand without any effort of the mind. They never point out by the epithets they unite with the word wit, any thing farther than the impreſſions made upon them, by the ideas and ſentiments preſented to them.

This being conſidered, we underſtand by a refined idea, an idea which eſcapes the penetration of moſt readers: now it eſcapes them, when the author skips over the intermediate ideas, neceſſary to make them conceive that which he offers them.

Such is this ſentence, which Fontenelle repeats ſo often: "People would de-"ſtroy almoſt all religions, if thoſe who profeſſed them were obliged to love "one another (b)." A man of wit eaſily ſupplies the intermediate ideas, which connect together the two propoſitions included in this ſentence (c): but there are few men of wit.

We alſo give the name of refined ideas, to thoſe that are dreſſed in obſcure, enigmatical, and far-fetched terms. We, in general, affix the epithet fine, leſs to the ſpecies of ideas, than to the manner of expreſſing them.

In the elogium on cardinal Dubois, when ſpeaking of the care he took of the education of the duke of Orleans, M. de Fontenelle, ſays, "That this pre-

(b) That which may be true of a falſe religion, is not applicable to ours, which commands us to love our neighbour.

(c) It is the ſame with this other phraſe, uſed by M. de Fontenelle: "In writing," ſays he, "I have always endeavoured to "underſtand myſelf." Few men really comprehend the force of this ſentence. They do not, like him, perceive all the importance of a precept, the obſervation of which is ſo difficult. Without mentioning people of ordinary underſtandings, among ſuch men as Malebranche, Leibnitz, and the greateſt philoſophers, how many are there who, for want of making uſe of this ſentence, have not endeavoured to underſtand themſelves, to de-compound their principles, in order to reduce them to ſimple and clear propoſitions, which they cannot perform without knowing whether they do, or do not underſtand themſelves? They have ſupported themſelves on theſe vague principles, the obſcurity of which muſt be always ſuſpected by every one who has Fontenelle's words habitually preſent to his mind. For want of having, if I may uſe the term, dug into the virgin earth, the immenſe edifice of their ſyſtem has ſunk in proportion as they have raiſed it.

" late had laboured every day to render himſelf uſeleſs;" it is to the obſcurity of the expreſſion, that this ſentence owes its refinement.

In the opera of Thetis, when that goddeſs, to revenge herſelf on Peleus, whom ſhe believes unfaithful, ſays:

Mon cœur s'eſt engagé ſous l'apparance vaine
Deus feux que tu feignis pour moi;
Mais je veux l'en punir, en m'impoſant la peine
D'en aimer un autre que toi;

My heart was obtained by the ſemblance vain,
Of the paſſion thou feignedſt for me;
But to puniſh myſelf, I will ſuffer the pain
Of loving another like thee;

it is ſtill certain that this idea, and all the ideas of this kind, owe the name of refined, which is commonly given them, to the enigmatical turn in which they make their appearance, and conſequently, to a ſmall effort of mind required to comprehend them. Now an author writes only to be underſtood: every thing then in the ſtyle which renders him obſcure, is a fault; and all refined turns of expreſſion are therefore blameable (d); we ſhould then be more attentive to give a ſimple and natural turn to an idea, in proportion as that idea is more refined, and may more eaſily eſcape the notice of the reader.

Let us now fix our attention on the kind of wit expreſſed by the epithet ſtrong.

A ſtrong idea, is one that is intereſting and proper to make a lively impreſſion. This impreſſion may either be produced by the idea itſelf, or the manner in which it is expreſſed (e).

A very common idea, delivered in a ſtriking expreſſion, or image, may make a very ſtrong impreſſion upon us. The abbot Cartaut, comparing Virgil to Lucan ſays; " Virgil is only a prieſt raiſed in the midſt of the grimaces of the

(d) I am very ſenſible that refined turns have their admirers. What every body eaſily underſtands, ſay they, every body believes they themſelves could have ſaid; clearneſs of expreſſion is therefore a want of addreſs in the author; who ought always to ſpread ſome clouds over his thoughts. Flattered by piercing this cloud, which is impenetrable to common readers, and with perceiving truth through the obſcurity of the expreſſion, a thouſand men praiſe with ſo much the more enthuſiaſm this manner of writing, as under the pretence of making an elogium on the author, they make one on their own penetration; this fact is certain. But I maintain, that we ought to deſpiſe ſuch praiſes, and reſiſt the deſire of deſerving them. Is a thought finely expreſſed? there are at firſt few men who underſtand it; but at length it is generally underſtood. Now as ſoon as the enigma of the expreſſion is diſcovered, this thought is by men of ſenſe reduced to its intrinſic value, and placed much below it by men of moderate abilities: aſhamed of their want of penetration, they always look upon it with an unjuſt contempt, to revenge the affront done to their ſagacity, by the fineneſs of the turn.

(e) In Perſia they repreſent the unequal powers of different poets, by the epithets painters and ſculptors; and therefore ſay, a poet-painter, a poet-ſculptor.

" temple;

" temple; the ſniveling, hypocritical, and devout character of his hero, diſ-
" honours the poet; his enthuſiaſm ſeems to be kindled by the flame of the
" lamps ſuſpended before the altars; while the bold enthuſiaſm of Lucan is ſet
" on fire by the lightning." What ſtrikes us forcibly, is what is underſtood by the epithet ſtrong. Now the great and ſtrong have this in common, that they make a lively impreſſion upon us, and hence they are often confounded.

To fix clearly, the different ideas that ought to be formed of grandeur and ſtrength, I ſhall ſeperately conſider the meaning of theſe terms, firſt, in ideas; ſecondly, in images; and, thirdly, in ſentiments.

A grand idea is one that is generally intereſting: but the ideas of this kind are not always thoſe that affect us in the moſt lively manner. The axioms of the Portico, or the Lyceum, though intereſting to all mankind in general, and conſequently to the Athenians; muſt not however, have made ſo great an impreſſion upon them as the ſpeech of Demoſthenes, when that orator reproached them for their cowardice. " You ask one another, ſaid he, is Philip dead?
" Well, of what importance is it to you, Athenians, whether he be dead or
" living? When heaven ſhall have delivered you, you yourſelves will ſoon be
" another Philip." If the Athenians were more ſtruck at the ſpeech of their orator, than at the diſcoveries of their philoſophers, it was becauſe Demoſthenes preſented them with ideas more ſuitable to their preſent ſituation, and conſequently thoſe, in which they were more immediately concerned.

Now the men, who are in general only ſenſible of the preſent moment, will be always affected in a more lively manner by this kind of ideas, than with thoſe, which, on account of their being grand and general, belong leſs immediately to the ſituation in which they are placed.

Thus thoſe pieces of eloquence proper to fill the ſoul with emotion, and thoſe orations ſo ſtrong, becauſe they diſcuſs the actual intereſt of a ſtate, are not, and cannot be, of ſuch extenſive and durable uſe, as the diſcoveries of a philoſopher, which are equally ſuited to all times and places.

In relation to ideas, the only difference between the great and the ſtrong is, that the one is more generally, and the other more warmly intereſting (f).

Does the inquiry relate to thoſe beautiful images, thoſe deſcriptions, or thoſe pictures, intended to ſtrike the imagination? The ſtrong, and the great, have this in common, that they preſent to us grand objects.

Tamerlane and Cartouche were two robbers, one of whom ravaged the world with four hundred thouſand men, and the other with four hundred; the firſt attracts our reſpect, and the laſt our contempt (g).

(f) People ſometimes ſay of a method of reaſoning, that it is ſtrong; but this is when it relates to ſomething in which they intereſt themſelves. Thus we do not give this name to geometrical demonſtrations, which of all reaſonings are doubtleſs the ſtrongeſt.

(g) Every thing becomes ridiculous without ſtrength, and every thing is ennobled with it. What a difference is there between the roguery of a ſmugler, and that of Charles V?

What

What I ſay of morals, I apply to phyſics. Every thing which in its own nature is little, or becomes ſuch on being compared with thoſe that are great, makes ſcarcely any impreſſion upon us.

Let Alexander be painted in the moſt heroic attitude at the moment when he ruſhes on the enemy, if the imagination places at the ſide of the hero one of thoſe ſons of war (h), which growing every year a cubit in circumference, and three or four in height, might heap Oſſa upon Pelion; Alexander is no more than a pretty puppet, and his fury becomes ridiculous.

But though the ſtrong is always grand, the grand is not always ſtrong. A decoration, either of the temple of the Deſtinies, or a heavenly feſtival, may be grand, and even ſublime; but it will affect us leſs ſtrongly than a deſcription of Tartarus. The picture of the Glory of the Saints, does not aſtoniſh the imagination ſo much as the Laſt Judgment of Michael Angelo.

The ſtrong is then produced, by the grand united to the terrible. Now if all men are more ſenſible of pain, than of pleaſure: if violent pain ſilences every agreeable ſenſation, while a lively pleaſure cannot ſtifle within us the ſenſation of violent pain, the ſtrong muſt make a more warm impreſſion, and we muſt be more ſtruck with the picture of Hell, than with one of Olympus.

In regard to pleaſure, imagination excited by the deſire of the greateſt happineſs is always inventive, and ſome charms in Olympus are alway wanting.

Does the ſubject require the terrible? Imagination has not the ſame intereſt in the invention of ſcenes of horror, this is leſs difficult: Hell is always ſufficiently terrible.

Such, in decorations and poetical deſcriptions, is the difference between the great, and the ſtrong. Let us now examine, whether in dramatic pictures, and the painting of the paſſions, we ſhall not find the ſame difference between theſe two kinds of wit.

In tragedy we give the name of ſtrong to every paſſion, to every ſentiment that affects us forcibly; that is, to all thoſe of which the ſpectator may be the ſport, or the victim.

No body is ſheltered from the ſtroke of revenge and jealouſy. The ſcene of Atreus, who preſents his brother Thyeſtes, with a cup filled with the blood of his ſon; the fury of Rhadamiſtus, who, to deliver the charms of Zenobia from the laſcivious looks of the conqueror, drags her bleeding into the Araxes, affords two pictures, which, in the opinion of every one, are more terrible than that of an ambitious man ſeated on the throne of his maſter.

In this laſt picture, a private perſon ſees no danger that can happen to himſelf. None of the ſpectators are monarchs: the misfortunes frequently occaſioned by revolutions are not ſo imminent as to ſtrike terror. The ſpectator muſt then conſider ſuch a ſight with pleaſure (i). This ſpectacle charms ſome by letting them

(h) In the eyes of this ſame giant, that Cæſar who ſaid of himſelf, *Veni, vidi, vici*, and whoſe conqueſts were ſo rapid, would appear to crawl upon the earth, with the ſlowneſs of a ſtar-fiſh, or a ſnail.

(i) To this cauſe, we ought in part, to refer the admiration conceived for thoſe ſcourges of the earth; for thoſe warriors whoſe valour overturns empires, and changes the face of the world. We read their hiſtory with pleaſure; but we rejoice that we were not born in their time. It is with theſe conquerors as with thoſe black clouds ſtreaked with lightning, the thunder of which

them ſee, in the moſt elevated ranks, the inſtability of happineſs which creates a certain equality among all conditions, and comforts the lower claſs for the inferiority of their ſtate. It pleaſes the others by flattering their inconſtancy: an inconſtancy, which being founded on the deſire of bettering their condition, makes the hope of a more happy ſtate glitter in their eyes, by the overthrow of empires, and ſhews them a poſſibility, as a poſſibility at hand. It, in ſhort, delights moſt men by the grandeur of the picture it repreſents, and by their being forced to intereſt themſelves in the fate of the hero virtuous and worthy of eſteem, placed by the poet on the ſtage. The deſire of happineſs, which always makes us conſider eſteem as the means of being more happy, creates in us a kind identity with ſuch a perſonage; this identity is the more perfect, and we intereſt ourſelves ſo much the more warmly in the happineſs, or unhappineſs, of a great man, in proportion as that great man appears to us more worthy of eſteem; that is, as his ideas and ſentiments, are more analogous to our own. Every one acknowledges in a hero, the ſentiment with which he himſelf is affected. This pleaſure is the greater, when the hero plays the greateſt part; when he, like Hannibal, Sylla, Sertorius, and Cæſar, triumphs over a people, on whoſe deſtiny that of the earth depends.

Objects always ſtrike us in proportion to their grandeur. If we repreſent on the ſtage the conſpiracy of the Genoeſe, and that of Rome; if we trace with a hand equally bold, the characters of the count Fieſchi and Catiline; if we give them the ſame force, the ſame courage, the ſame ſpirit, and the ſame elevation: I ſay, that the bold Catiline will gain almoſt the whole of our admiration; the grandeur of his enterprize will be reflected on his character, and render him great in our eyes, and our illuſion will make us even deſire his happineſs.

In fact, we ſhall always believe ourſelves the more happy, as we ſhall be more powerful, as we ſhall reign over a greater number of people, as more men will have an intereſt in preventing and ſatisfying our deſires, and as by being the only perſons free upon earth, we ſhall be ſurrounded by an univerſe of ſlaves.

Theſe are the principal cauſes of the pleaſure we receive from the painting of ambition, of that paſſion which obtains the name of great only from the great changes it produces on the earth.

Though love has ſometimes occaſioned the like; though, it decided the battle of Actium in favour of Octavius; though in an age nearer to our own, it has opened the ports of Spain to the Moors; and though it has ſucceſſively overturned and raiſed an infinite number of thrones; theſe great revolutions are not, however, ſo much the neceſſary effects of love, as they are of ambition.

Thus the deſire of grandeur, and the love of our country, which laſt may be conſidered as a more virtuous ambition, have always received the name of great, preferably to all the other paſſions: a name, which being confered on the heroes inſpired by theſe paſſions, has been at length given to Corneille, and the celebrated poets, who have painted them. Whence I obſerve, that

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which darting from them, roars and rends the trees and rocks. Seen near, the ſight freezes us with terror; ſeen at a diſtance it fills us with admiration.

the

the paſſion of love is not leſs difficult to paint, than that of ambition. To manage the character of Phædra with as much addreſs as Racine has done, certainly requires as many ideas and combinations, and as much wit, as to trace in Rodogune the character of Cleopatra. The name of great, then, depends leſs on the ability of the painter, than on the choice of his ſubject.

It follows from what I have ſaid, that if men are more ſenſible of pain than of pleaſure, the objects of fear and terror muſt, with reſpect to ideas, pictures, and paſſions, affect them more ſtrongly than objects formed for the general aſtoniſhment and admiration. The great is then, in every kind that which univerſally ſtrikes; and the ſtrong, that which makes a leſs general, but more lively impreſſion.

The diſcovery of the compaſs, is, without diſpute, of more general uſe to mankind, than the diſcovery of a conſpiracy; but this laſt is infinitely more important, with reſpect to the nation where the conſpiracy is formed.

The idea of ſtrength being once determined, I ſhall obſerve, that men being only able to communicate their ideas by words, if the ſtrength of the expreſſion is not anſwerable to that of the thought, however ſtrong that thought may be, it will always appear weak, at leaſt to thoſe indued with a vigour of mind ſufficient to ſupply the faintneſs of the expreſſion.

Now to give ſtrength to a thought, it is neceſſary, firſt, that it ſhould be expreſſed in a clear and preciſe manner: every idea clothed in an ambiguous expreſſion, is an object perceived through a fog; the impreſſion is not diſtinct enough to be ſtrong. Secondly, It is neceſſary that this thought ſhould, if poſſible, be repreſented by an image, and that the image be exactly ſuited to the thought.

In fact, if all our ideas are preſented by our ſenſations, we ought to convey our ideas to other men by the ſenſes; and as I have ſaid in the chapter on Imagination, to ſpeak to the eyes, in order to be underſtood by the mind.

To ſtrike us ſtrongly, it is not even enough that an image be juſt and exactly adapted to an idea; it muſt be great without being gigantic (k): ſuch is the image employed by the immortal author of the Spirit of Laws, when he compares tyrants to the ſavages, who, with an ax in their hand cut down the tree, when they would gather the fruit.

It is alſo neceſſary, that this grand image, ſhould be new, or at leaſt preſented under a new aſpect. It is the ſurpriſe excited by its novelty, which fixing our whole attention on an idea, gives time to make a ſtronger impreſſion upon us.

We, in ſhort, attain the laſt degree of perfection in this kind, when the image under which we preſent an idea is in motion. The moving picture is always to be preferred to a picture of an object at reſt; it excites in us more ſenſations,

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(k) The exceſſive greatneſs of an image, ſometimes renders it ridiculous. When the pſalmiſt ſays, "that the mountains skipped "like rams," this grand image makes but a ſmall impreſſion upon us, becauſe there are few men whoſe imaginations are ſufficiently ſtrong, to form a clear and lively picture of mountains ſkipping about like ſheep.

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and conſequently makes a more lively impreſſion. We are leſs ſtruck with the calm air, than with a tempeſt.

It is then to the imagination, that an author owes, in part, the ſtrength of his expreſſion; by its aſſiſtance, he tranſmits into the ſoul of his readers, all the fire of his thoughts. If the Engliſh in this reſpect, attribute to themſelves a great ſuperiority over us, they owe this advantage leſs to the peculiar ſtrength of their language, than to the form of their government. People always uſe ſtrength of expreſſion in a free ſtate, where men conceive the moſt noble thoughts, and may expreſs them with as much boldneſs as they conceive them. This is not the caſe in monarchies: in theſe countries, the intereſt of certain bodies, that of ſome men in power, and more frequently ſtill, falſe and little politics, oppoſe theſe flights of genius. Whoever in theſe governments conceives grand ideas, is often forced to conceal them, or at leaſt to enervate their ſtrength by ambiguous, enigmatical, and weak expreſſions. Thus lord Cheſterfield, in a letter, addreſſed to the abbe de Guaſco, ſays, ſpeaking of the author of the Spirit of Laws, "It is a pity that the preſident of Monteſquieu, "doubtleſs reſtrained by the fear of the miniſtry, has not had the courage to "ſpeak out. We perceive upon the whole, what he thinks on certain ſubjects; "but he does not expreſs himſelf with ſufficient clearneſs and ſtrength: we "ſhould have better known what he thought, if he had compoſed it at London, and had been born in England."

This want of ſtrength in expreſſion does not however proceed from a want of genius in the nation. In every thing that appears trifling to thoſe in place, are, with diſdain, abandoned to genius, I may cite a thouſand proofs of this truth. What force of expreſſion is there in ſome of Boſſuet's orations, and in ſome of the ſcenes of Mahomet! a tragedy which, notwithſtanding the criticiſms made upon it, is, perhaps, one of the fineſt works of the celebrated M. de Voltaire.

I ſhall conclude with a paſſage from the abbe Cartout, full of that ſtrength of expreſſion, of which it has been thought that our language is not capable. He there diſcovers the cauſes of the ſuperſtition of the Egyptians.

"How could this people avoid being highly ſuperſtitious? Egypt, ſays he, "was the country of enchantment; imagination was there perpetually ſtruck "by the grand machines of the marvelous, and nothing was to be ſeen but "nights of terror and admiration. The prince was an object of aſtoniſhment "and fear: like the thunder which gathers in the depths of the clouds, and "ſeems there to roll with greater grandeur and majeſty; it was from the moſt "retired part of his labyrinths and his palace, that the monarch dictated his "will. The kings never ſhewed themſelves without the terrifying and formidable apparatus of a power ſprung from a divine original. The death of "the kings was an apotheoſis: the earth ſunk under the weight of their Mauſoleums. By theſe powerful gods, Egypt was covered with ſuperb obeliſks, "filled with wonderful inſcriptions, and with enormous pyramids, whoſe "ſummits were loſt in the air: by theſe beneficent gods thoſe lakes were "formed, which ſecured Egypt againſt the inattentions of nature.

"More formidable than the throne and its monarchs, the temples and their "pontiffs ſtill farther impoſed on the imagination of the Egyptians. In one of "theſe temples was the coloſſus of Serapis. No mortal dared to approach it.

" To the duration of this coloſſus, was connected that of the world: whoever " had broke this taliſman, would have replunged the earth into its firſt chaos. " No bounds were ſet to credulity; every thing in Egypt was enigma, won- " der, and miſtery. All the temples gave oracles; all the caverns belched forth " horrible howlings; every where were ſeen trembling tripods, the Pythia " in a rage, victims, prieſts, and magicians, who, inveſted with the power of " the gods, were intruſted with their vengeance.

" The philoſophers armed againſt ſuperſtition, roſe up againſt it: but ſoon " engaged in the labyrinth of too abſtracted metaphyſics, diſpute divided " their opinions; intereſt and fanaticiſm took advantage of it, and produced the " chaos of their different ſyſtems; from thence ſprung the pompous myſteries " of Iſis, Oſiris, and Horus. Then, covered with the myſterious and ſublime " darkneſs of theology and religion, the impoſture was undiſcovered. If " ſome Egyptians perceived it, by the glimmering uncertain light of doubt, " revenge, always ſuſpended over the head of the indiſcreet, ſhut their eyes " to the light, and their mouths to the truth. Even the kings, who in order to " ſhelter themſeves from all inſult, had at firſt in concert with the prieſts, " raiſed up about the throne terror, ſuperſtition, and the phantoms in their train; " the kings, I ſay, were themſelves terrified at them, and ſoon entruſted " the temples with the ſacred depoſitum of the young princes: fatal epocha of " the tyranny of the Egyptian prieſts! No obſtacle could then oppoſe their " power. Their ſovereigns were encircled from their infancy with the " bandage of opinion; free and independent as they were, while they ſaw no- " thing in theſe prieſts but cheats, and mercenary enthuſiaſts, they became " their ſlaves and victims. The people, the imitators of their kings, followed " their example, and all Egypt fell proſtrate at the feet of the pontiff, and the " altar of ſuperſtition."

This magnificent picture, by the abbe Cartout, proves, I think, that the weakneſs of expreſſion with which we are reproached, and which on certain occaſions, is viſible in our writings, cannot be attributed to a want of natural genius.

CHAP. V.

Of a luminous, extenſive, and penetrating Wit; and of Taſte.

IF we believe certain people, genius is a kind of inſtinct, that may, without the knowlege of him who is poſſeſſed of it, render him capable of producing the greateſt things. They place this inſtinct much below the light of wit, which they take for univerſal intelligence. This opinion, ſupported by ſome men remarkable for wit, is not however yet adopted by the public.

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In order to arrive at ſome concluſions on this ſubject, it is neceſſary to attach clear ideas to the term, luminous wit.

In phyſics light is a body which renders objects viſible. The light of wit is then that which renders our ideas viſible to common readers. It conſiſts in diſpoſing all the ideas that concur to prove a truth in ſuch a manner, that we may eaſily comprehend them. The title of luminous wit, is then granted by the gratitude of the public, to him who enlightens them.

Before M. de Fontenelle, moſt of the learned, after having ſcaled the ſharp ſummit of the ſciences, found themſelves there alone, and deprived of all communication with other men. They had not ſmoothed the road of the ſciences, nor marked out a path for ignorance to walk in. Fontenelle, whom I do not conſider here in a light, which places him in the rank of men of genius, was, if I may uſe the term, the firſt who eſtabliſhed a bridge of communication between learning and ignorance. He perceived that the ignorant themſelves might receive the ſeeds of all truths: but that for this purpoſe, addreſs ought to be uſed to prepare their minds for it; that a new idea, to uſe his own expreſſion, is a wedge which we cannot drive in at the broad end, he therefore made uſe of all his endeavours to preſent his ideas with the greateſt clearneſs; he ſucceeded in this: the turf of weak minds was ſuddenly kindled, and the gratitude of the public beſtowed on him, the title of a luminous wit.

What muſt be done to produce ſuch a prodigy? Simply to obſerve the progreſs of ordinary minds: to know that every thing leads and contributes towards it; that in relation to ideas, ignorance is always conſtrained to yield to the immenſe power of the inſenſible progreſs of light; which I compare to thoſe ſlender roots, which inſinuating themſelves into the crannies of the rocks, there grow, and cauſe them to ſplit. It is alſo neceſſary to perceive, that nature is only a long chain, and that by the aſſiſtance of the intermediate ideas, we may raiſe minds of moderate abilities, nearer and nearer, till they reach the higheſt ideas (a).

The light of wit is therefore only the talent of bringing thoughts nearer to each other, of uniting the ideas already known, with thoſe that are leſs known, and of giving theſe ideas in clear and determinate expreſſions.

This talent is in philoſophy, what verſification is in poetry. All the art of the verſifier conſiſts in giving the thoughts of the poets with force and harmony; all the art of a luminous wit, is in expreſſing, with great clearneſs, the ideas of the philoſophers.

(a) There is nothing that men may not underſtand. However complicated a propoſition may be, it is poſſible, by the aſſiſtance of analyſis, to reduce it to a number of ſimple propoſitions, and theſe propoſitions will become ſo evident, that a man will be unable to deny them, without contradicting himſelf, and without ſaying, that a thing may and may not be at the ſame time. Every truth may be brought to this concluſion; and when this is done, no eyes will be ſhut againſt the light. But what time and obſervation are neceſſary to carry the analyſis to this point, and to reduce for certain the truths, to ſuch ſimple propoſitions! this is the labour of all ages, and of all men of learning, who are conſtantly employed in the inveſtigation of truth, and uniting ſeparate ideas, while the public wait for the ſucceſs of their diſcoveries, in order to ſeize the truths they propoſe.

These two talents neither suppose nor exclude genius or invention. If Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Bacon, have this light of wit united to genius and invention, all men are not so happy. The light of wit is sometimes only the interpreter of the philosophical genius, and the organ by which it communicates, to common minds, ideas too much above their understanding.

If people have sometimes confounded luminous wit with genius, it proceeds from their both enlightening mankind, and their not having fully perceived that genius was the centre and focus, to which this kind of wit attracts the luminous ideas which are reflected on the multitude.

In the sciences, genius, like a bold navigator, searches for, and discovers unknown regions. It is the business of the luminous wits, to draw slowly after their steps, the heavy mass of common minds.

In the arts, genius, more free than the light of wit, may be compared to a proud courser, that, with a rapid foot, pushes into the thickest part of the forest, and bounds through the thickets and over the quagmires. Incessantly employed in observing him, and wanting the activity to follow him in his course, the luminous wit waits at some opening, there observes him, and marks some of the steps he has imprinted on the ground; but can only fix on a small number.

In fact, if in the arts, such as eloquence and poetry, a luminous wit might give all the fine rules, from the observation of which must result perfect poems or discourses, eloquence and poetry would no longer be arts of genius; we should become great poets, and great orators, as we become good arithmeticians. Genius alone can seize all those fine rules, which secure its success. The inability of the light of wit, to discover every thing, is the cause of its little success in the very art, in which it has often given excellent precepts. It happily accomplishes some of the conditions necessary for making a good work, but it omits the principal.

M. de Fontenelle, whom I quote, in order to illustrate this idea, by an example, has certainly given excellent precepts. That great man, however, not having, in his art of poetry, treated either of versification, or of moving the passions, it is probable, that by observing the fine rules that he has prescribed, he would have composed none but dull tragedies.

It follows from the difference established between genius, and the light of wit, that the human race is not obliged to the latter for any discoveries, and that luminous wit does not extend to the bounds of our ideas.

This kind of wit is then only a talent, a method of conveying, in a clear manner, our ideas to others. Upon which, I shall observe, that all men who would concentrate themselves in one art, and express with clearness only, the principles of that art; as for instance, music or painting, would not be reckoned among the luminous wits.

In order to obtain this title, it is necessary, either to diffuse light upon something extremely interesting, or upon a number of different subjects. What is called light, always supposes extensive knowlege. This kind of wit, ought, for this reason, to impose even on men of learning, and in conversation, have the advantage over genius. Let one of these luminous wits be placed in an assembly of men, celebrated for their skill in the different arts and sciences; if he speaks of painting to a poet, of philosophy to a painter, or of sculpture to a philosopher,

philoſopher, he will expreſs his principles with more preciſion, and exhibit his ideas with greater clearneſs, than theſe illuſtrious men would expreſs them to each other, and thence he would obtain their eſteem. But let this man go, and talk of painting to a painter, of poetry to a poet, or of philoſophy to a philoſopher, and he would appear no more than a perſon of clear, but limited underſtanding, and well verſed in common place. There is only one caſe in which luminous and extenſive wits may be reckoned among the men of genius: that is, when they are well skilled in ſome ſciences, and perceiving the relations that ſubſiſt between them, they reduce them to their common and more general principles.

What I have ſaid, eſtabliſhes a ſenſible difference between penetrating, luminous, and extenſive wits: theſe laſt, caſt a rapid view over an infinite number of objects; the others, on the contrary, attach themſelves to few objects; but they dive to the bottom of them; they ſurvey in depth, the ſpace which the extenſive wits run over in ſurface. The idea I affix to the word penetrating, agrees with its etymology. The property of this kind of wit is to pierce into a ſubject; but if it has dived to a particular depth, it then loſes the name of penetrating, and aſſumes that of profound.

Profound wit, or the genius of the ſciences, is, ſays Mr. Formey, the art of reducing ideas already diſtinct, to other ideas ſtill more ſimple and clear, till we have the laſt ſolution poſſible. Whoever could know, adds Mr. Formey, to what a point every man has carried this analyſis, would have the gradual ſcale of the depth of all minds.

It follows from this idea, that the ſhortneſs of life will not permit a man to be profoundly skilled in many ſciences, that wit is leſs extenſive, in proportion as it is more penetrating and profound, and that there is no ſuch thing as a univerſal wit.

In regard to a penetrating wit, I obſerve, that the public grants this title only to the illuſtrious men, who employ themſelves in the ſciences, in which they are more or leſs initiated; ſuch are morality, politics, metaphyſics, &c. With reſpect to painting or geometry, a perſon is conſidered as penetrating, only by thoſe who are proficients in that art or ſcience. The public, too ignorant to ſet a value on theſe different kinds of penetration with reſpect to the mind of a particular perſon, judge of his works, and never apply to his abilities the epithet of penetrating; they wait before they praiſe him, till by the ſolution of ſome difficult problems, or the drawing of ſome fine picture, a man has deſerved the title of a great geometrician, or a great painter.

I ſhall add but one word to what I have ſaid, which is, that ſagacity and penetration partake of the ſame nature. A perſon appears endued with great ſagacity, when having long meditated, and had habitually preſent to this mind, the ſubjects moſt commonly treated of in converſation, he ſearches into them with vivacity. The only difference between penetration and ſagacity of mind is, that this laſt ſuppoſes more quickneſs of conception, and that the perſon has more lately ſtudied the queſtions that afford proofs of his ſagacity. A perſon has ſo much the more ſagacity in relation to any ſubject, as he has more profoundly and more lately been employed about it.

Let us now paſs to taſte: the laſt ſubject I propoſe to examine in this chapter.

Taſte,

Taſte, taken in its moſt extenſive ſignification, is, in relation to works, the knowledge of what merits the eſteem of mankind. Among the arts and ſciences there are ſome with regard to which the public adopt the opinion of men of ſkill, and never of themſelves pronounce any judgment; ſuch are geometry, mechanics, ſome parts of natural philoſophy, and painting. In theſe arts and ſciences the only men of taſte are the perſons verſed in them; and taſte is in theſe various kinds only the knowlege of the truly beautiful.

This is not the caſe with reſpect to thoſe works of which the public are, or believe themſelves to be judges, as poems, romances, tragedies, moral diſcourſes, politics, &c. In theſe various kinds we ought not to underſtand by the word taſte the exact knowlege of that beauty proper to ſtrike people of all ages and countries; but the more particular knowlege of what pleaſes the public in a certain nation. There are two methods of arriving at this knowlege, and conſequently two different kinds of taſte. One which I ſhall call habitual taſte: ſuch is that of moſt players, who, by the daily ſtudy of the ideas and ſentiments proper to pleaſe the public, are rendered very good judges of theatrical works, and eſpecially of thoſe which reſemble the pieces already publiſhed. The other is a rational taſte, founded on a profound knowlege of human nature, and the ſpirit of the age. The men endued with this laſt kind of taſte are particularly qualified to judge of original works. He who has only an habitual taſte muſt be void of taſte whenever he is deſtitute of objects of compariſon. But this rational taſte, which is doubtleſs ſuperior to that I call habitual, is only acquired, as I have already ſaid, by long ſtudy both of the public taſte, and of the art or ſcience in which a perſon pretends to the title of a man of taſte. I may then, by applying to taſte, what I have ſaid of wit, conclude that there is no ſuch thing as univerſal taſte.

The only obſervation that remains on the ſubject of taſte is, that illuſtrious men are not always the beſt judges of it, in that very kind where they have had moſt ſucceſs. What it may be aſked, is the cauſe of this literary phænomenon? To this I reply, it is with great writers as with great painters, each has his manner. M. de Crebillion, for inſtance, ſometimes expreſſes his ideas with a force, a heat, an energy, peculiar to himſelf. M. de Fontenelle preſents them with an order, a clearneſs, and a turn remarkable of his own; and M. de Voltaire expreſſes them with an imagination, grandeur, and continued elegance. Now each of theſe illuſtrious men, neceſſitated by his taſte to conſider his own manner as the beſt, muſt, conſequently, ſet a greater value on the man of moderate abilities, who ſeizes it, than on the man of genius, who has a taſte of his own. Hence arrives the different judgments often formed on the ſame work by the celebrated writers and the public, who, having no eſteem for imitators, would have an author be himſelf, and not another.

Thus the man of wit, who has perfected his taſte in one kind without having compoſed himſelf or adopted another's manner, has commonly a ſurer taſte than the greateſt writers. No intereſt puts him under an illuſion, and hinders his placing himſelf in the ſame point of view in which the public conſiders and forms a judgment of a work.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of a Genius for writing with elegance.

WHAT pleaſes in all ages and in all countries is called beautiful. But to form a more exact and diſtinct idea, perhaps it may be neceſſary to examine what it is in each art, and even in each part of an art, that conſtitutes beauty. From this examination we may eaſily deduce the idea of a beauty common to all the arts and ſciences, from whence we may at length form an abſtract and general idea of beauty.

If the public unites the epithet of beauty to the productions of the mind, theſe are called works of elegance; an elegance which conſiſts in beauty. We muſt not, however, affix to this epithet the idea of that true beauty of which we have not yet given a clear definition. It is to works of entertainment that we particularly give the name of elegant. This kind of genius is very different from the inſtructive. Inſtruction is leſs arbitrary: for important diſcoveries in chemiſtry, natural philoſophy, and geometry, equally uſeful to all nations, are equally eſteemed. This is not the caſe with what is produced by a fine genius: the eſteem, conceived for a work of this kind, ought to be differently modified among different nations, according to the difference of their manners and form of government, and of the progreſs which the arts and ſciences have made. Every nation then attaches different ideas to the word elegant. But as there are none where they do not compoſe poems, romances, theatrical pieces, panegyrics, hiſtories (a), and thoſe works, in ſhort, which employ the reader without fatiguing him, ſo there is no nation where, at leaſt under another name, they do not know what we here mean by the capacity for elegant writing.

Whoever, in theſe ſeveral kinds, do not attain to the title of a genius, is comprehended in the claſs of elegant writers, when he joins grace and elegance to a happy choice of ideas. Deſpreaux ſaid, ſpeaking of the elegant Racine, "That it was only from my taſte for the elegance of this author, "that I learnt with difficulty to make verſes." I certainly do not adopt Deſpreaux's judgment on Racine; but I think I may conclude from it, that it is principally in the clearneſs, the colouring, the expreſſion, and in the art of repreſenting our ideas, that conſiſts that elegance of writing to which is given the name of beauty, only becauſe it pleaſes, will really pleaſe, and moſt generally ought to do ſo.

(a) I do not ſpeak of thoſe hiſtories written with a view of inſtruction, ſuch as the Annals of Tacitus, which being filled with profound ideas on morality and politics, and not being to be read without ſome efforts of attention, cannot, for this reaſon, be ſo generally reliſhed and felt.

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In fact, if, as M. de Vaugelas remarks, there are more judges of words than of ideas, and if men are in general leſs ſenſible of the juſtneſs of reaſoning than of the beauty of an expreſſion (b), it is to the art of expreſſing ourſelves well that we ought to affix the title of elegant writing.

After having ſtated this idea, it will, perhaps, be concluded, that a capacity of writing with elegance is no more than the art of writing elegantly upon nothing and without a meaning. My anſwer to this concluſion is, that a work, void of ſenſe, would be only a continued flow of harmonious ſounds, that would obtain no eſteem (c); and, therefore, the public adorns with the title of elegant writers only thoſe whoſe works are full of grand, ſublime, or intereſting ideas. There is no idea which may be excluded from polite writing, if we except thoſe, which, ſuppoſing too much preliminary ſtudy, are not thought ſuitable to the polite.

I do not pretend in this anſwer, to caſt any blemiſh on the glory of philoſophers. Philoſophic ſtudies, beyond all contradiction, ſuppoſe ſtricter reſearches, cloſer reflections, more profound ideas, and even a particular kind of life. In the world we learn to expreſs our ideas well; but it is in retirement that we acquire them. We there make an infinite number of obſervations on things, and in the world we only make them on the manner of expreſſing them. Philoſophers ought then, on account of the depth of their ideas, to be preferred to polite writers; but from theſe laſt are required ſo many graces and ſuch elegance, that the neceſſary conditions, to merit the title of philoſopher, or an elegant writer, are, perhaps, equally difficult to be fulfilled. It appears, at leaſt, that in theſe two kinds, illuſtrious men are equally rare. Indeed, in order to be able to inſtruct and to pleaſe at the ſame time, what knowlege does it require in language, and in the ſpirit of the age? What taſte, always to preſent ideas under an agreeable aſpect? What ſtudy, to diſpoſe them in ſuch a manner as to make the moſt lively impreſſion on the mind of the readers? What obſervations, to diſtinguiſh the particulars that ought to be treated at large, from thoſe, which, in order to be felt, have only need of being preſented? And what art, conſtantly to unite variety to order and clearneſs; and, as M. de Fontenelle ſays, to excite the curioſity of the mind to manage its lazineſs, and to prevent its inconſtancy?

It is here the difficulty of ſucceeding, that is, doubtleſs, in part the cauſe of the little value polite writers commonly ſet on works of mere reaſoning. As the man of a contracted mind perceives in philoſophy nothing but a heap of puerile and myſterious enigmas, and hates in philoſophers the trouble

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(b) I ſhall relate on this ſubject a ſaying of Malherbe. He was on his death-bed, and his confeſſor, to inſpire him with the greater fervour and reſignation, deſcribed to him the joys of heaven; but made uſe of low and mean expreſſions. The deſcription being ended, "Well, ſaid he to the ſick "man, do not you feel a great deſire to "enjoy theſe celeſtial pleaſures?"—"O "ſir! replied Malherbe, talk to me no "more about them, your bad ſtyle gives "me a diſguſt to them."

(c) A perſon would not now be quoted as a man of wit, for writing a madrigal or a ſonnet.

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it would give him to underſtand them, ſo the polite genius treats them ſcarcely with greater favour: he alſo hates in their works the dryneſs and ſtiffneſs of inſtruction. Too much employed about writing well, and leſs ſolicitous about ſenſe (d), than about the elegance of the phraſe, he acknowleges only thoſe to be good thoughts, where the ideas are happily expreſſed. The leaſt obſcurity ſhocks him. He is ignorant that a profound idea, however clearly it is expreſſed, will be always unintelligible to common readers, when they cannot reduce it to ſuch propoſitions as are extremely ſimple; and that it is with theſe profound ideas as with the pure and limpid waters, which by their depth always loſe their tranſparency.

Beſides, among the elegant writers there are ſome who, being the ſecret enemies of philoſophy, countenance the opinion of men of limited underſtandings. The dupes of a little ridiculous vanity, they, in this reſpect, adopt popular errors: and without eſteem for the juſtneſs, profoundneſs, and novelty of the thoughts, they ſeem to forget that the art of elegant expreſſion neceſſarily ſuppoſes, that a perſon ſhould have ſomething to ſay; and that, in ſhort, an elegant writer may be compared to a jeweller, whoſe dexterity becomes uſeleſs if he has no diamonds to ſet.

The learned and the philoſophers, on the contrary, give themſelves up intirely to reſearches into facts or ideas, and are often ignorant of the beauties and the difficulties of the art of writing. They, conſequently, ſet little value on an elegant writer; and their unjuſt contempt is principally founded on a great inſenſibility with reſpect to the ſpecies of ideas that enter into the compoſition of elegant performances. They are almoſt all, in ſome reſpects, like that geometrician, before whom a great elogium was made on the tragedy of Iphigenia; this elogium excited his curioſity; he deſired the perſon to lend him the tragedy; but having read ſome ſcenes, he returned it, ſaying, "For my part, I cannot think what you find ſo beautiful in this "work; it proves nothing."

The learned abbe de Longuerue was nearly in the ſame caſe with this geometrician: poetry had no charms for him; he equally deſpiſed the grandeur of Corneille, and the elegance of Racine: he had, he ſaid, baniſhed all the poets from his library (e).

In order to be equally ſenſible of the merit both of ideas and expreſſions, we ought, like Plato, Montaigne, Bacon, Monteſquieu, and ſome of our philoſophers whoſe modeſty prevents my naming them, to unite the art

(d) Nothing can be more diſagreeable to a perſon, who does not expreſs himſelf happily, than to be judged by the elegant writers, or even the half-wits. They make no account of his ideas, and only judge of his words. How ſuperior ſoever he may really be to thoſe who treat him as weak, he will never reform their judgment, and, in their opinion, he will always paſs for a fool.

(e) "There are, ſays the ſame abbe de "Longuerue, two works on Homer, worth "more than Homer himſelf; the firſt is, "ANTIQUITATES HOMERICÆ, the other, "HOMERI GNOMOLOGIA, PER DUPORTUM. Whoever has read theſe two "books, has read all that is good in Homer, without ſuffering the fatigue of his "ſleepy tales."

of writing, with the art of thinking well; an uncommon union, never to be found but in men of great genius.

After having pointed out the cauſes of the contempt which ſome of the learned and ſome of the polite writers reſpectively entertain for each other; I ought to ſhew the cauſes of the contempt into which polite writers fall, and muſt daily do ſo, rather than thoſe of any other kind.

The taſte of our age for philoſophy has filled it with writers of diſſertations, who, though dull, heavy, and tireſome, are, however, full of admiration for the profoundneſs of their judgments. Among theſe writers there are ſome who expreſs themſelves very ill: they ſuſpect it; they know that every one is a judge of elegance and clearneſs of expreſſion, and that, in this reſpect, it is impoſſible to impoſe upon the public: they are then forced, from a regard to their own vanity, to renounce the title of elegant writers, in order to aſſume that of good writers. They have heard that a good writer ſometimes expreſſes himſelf in an obſcure manner; they are ſenſible, therefore, that, by limiting their pretenſions to the title of good writers, they may always hide the abſurdity of their reaſonings under the obſcurity of their expreſſions, and that this alone is a certain way of preventing their being convicted of folly: thus they ſeize it with avidity, concealing as much as poſſible from themſelves, that the want of elegance is the only thing that can give them a claim of being good writers, and that writing ill is no proof that they think well.

The judgment of ſuch men, rich and powerful as they often are (f), would yet make no impreſſion on the public, if they were not ſupported by the authority of certain philoſophers, who being, like the polite writers, jealous of an excluſive eſteem, do not perceive that every different kind of writing has its particular admirers; that there are every where found more laurels than there are heads to be crowned with them; that every nation has, at its diſpoſal, funds of eſteem ſufficient to ſatisfy all the pretenſions of illuſtrious men; and that, in ſhort, by inſpiring a diſguſt againſt polite writing, they arm againſt all the great writers the contempt of perſons of mean capacities, who having an intereſt of deſpiſing wit, comprehend equally under the name of a fine writer, which is ſcarcely more known to them, both the learned and the philoſopher, and in general all the thinking part of mankind.

(f) In general thoſe who without ſucceſs have cultivated the arts and ſciences, if they are raiſed to the higheſt poſts in the ſtate, become the moſt cruel enemies of the men of letters. To decry them, they prompt the fools to do ſo; they would annihilate that kind of genius in which they have not ſucceeded. We may ſay, that in letters, as well as in religion, apoſtates are the greateſt perſecutors.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Spirit of the age.

THIS kind of ſpirit does not at all contribute to the advancement of the arts and ſciences, and would have no place in this work, if it did not fill a very great one in the heads of an infinite number of men.

Wherever the people are held in no conſideration, what is called the ſpirit of the age, is only the ſpirit of the perſons who give the lead, that is, the men of diſtinction and the courtiers.

The men of diſtinction and the polite writers both expreſs themſelves with elegance and purity, and both are commonly more ſolicitous about expreſſing themſelves well, than about thinking juſtly: however, they neither do, nor ought to diſcourſe on the ſame ſubjects (a), becauſe they have different objects in view. The elegant writer, greedy of the public eſteem, ought either to exhibit grand pictures, or to preſent ſuch ideas as are of importance to mankind in general, or at leaſt to his own nation. A perſon of diſtinction, ſatisfied, on the contrary, with the admiration of thoſe that give the lead, employs himſelf only in preſenting agreeable ideas to what is called good company.

I have ſaid in the ſecond diſcourſe, that we can talk in company only on things, or perſons; that good company are commonly ſuperficial; that they employ themſelves ſcarcely about any thing but perſons; that praiſe is burdenſome to whoever is not the ſubject of it, and that it makes the auditors yawn. Thus thoſe who compoſe the polite circles, give a malignant interpretation to the actions of men, ſeize their weak ſide, turn into a jeſt things the moſt ſerious, laugh at every thing, and throw a ridicule upon all ideas contrary to thoſe agreeable to the company. The ſpirit of converſation is then reduced to the talent of agreeable defamation, eſpecially in this age, in which every body pretends to wit, and believes he has a great deal; in which no one can mention the ſuperiority of another, without wounding the vanity of every one elſe; in which they diſtinguiſh the men of merit, from the man of mean abilities, only by the manner in which they defame him; in which they are in a manner agreed to divide the nation into two claſſes, the one that of brutes, who are the moſt numerous, the other that of fools, and comprehend in this laſt claſs all thoſe whom they cannot help acknowleging to be poſſeſſed of abilities.

(a) A thouſand agreeable ſtrokes in converſation would be inſipid to the reader. "The reader, ſays Boileau, would make "a profit of his amuſement."

Beſides, defamation is now the only reſource they have left for praiſing themſelves and the company. Every one is deſirous of doing this: whether he blames or approves, whether he ſpeaks or is ſilent, he is always making his own apology; for every man is an orator, who, by his diſcourſe, or his actions, is perpetually making his own panegyric. There are two ways of praiſing ourſelves; one, by ſaying things to our own advantage; the other, by ſpeaking ill of our neighbours. Cicero, Horace, and in general all the ancients, were more frank in their pretenſions, and openly gave themſelves the praiſes they thought they deſerved. Our age is become more delicate on this article. It is only by the ill we ſay of another, that we are now permitted to make our own elogium. It is by making a jeſt of a fool, we indirectly boaſt our own wit. This manner of praiſing ourſelves is doubtleſs the moſt directly oppoſite to good manners; however, it is the only one in uſe. Whoever ſays of himſelf the good he thinks, is puffed up with pride, and every one ſhuns him. Whoever, on the contrary, praiſes himſelf by the evil he ſays of others, is a charming man; he is ſurrounded with grateful auditors; they ſhare with him the praiſes he indirectly gives himſelf, and inceſſantly applaud the fine ſpeeches which deliver them from the vexation of being obliged to offer incenſe to their own vanity. It appears, that, in general, the malignity of the world proceeds leſs from the deſign of doing an injury, than from people's deſire of raiſing an opinion of their own merit. Thus this vice is eaſily indulged and put in practice, not only by the polite, but by men of narrow and contracted minds, whoſe intentions are ſtill more odious. The man of merit knows, that the perſon of whom they ſay no ill, is, in general, one of whom they can ſay no good; that thoſe who do not love to praiſe, have commonly been themſelves but little praiſed: he is, therefore, not deſirous of their commendations: he conſiders ſtupidity as a misfortune, on which ſtupidity always ſeeks to be revenged. "Let them prove no fact againſt me, ſaid a man of great wit; "let them talk as ill of me as they pleaſe, I ſhall not be ſorry for it; it "is proper that every one ſhould amuſe himſelf." But if philoſophy pardons malice, it ought not, however, to applaud it. To theſe indiſcrete applauſes we owe ſuch a number of miſchievous perſons, who, in other reſpects, are ſometimes a very good ſort of people. Flattered by the praiſes beſtowed on malice, and by the reputation for wit which it procures, they do not know how to place a proper eſteem on the goodneſs that is natural to them: they would render themſelves formidable by the ſeverity of their ſatire: they have unhappily ſo much wit as to ſucceed in it: they, at firſt, became wicked to give themſelves an air, and afterwards remain ſo by habit.

O you, who have not yet contracted this fatal cuſtom, ſhut your ears to the praiſes given to thoſe ſatirical ſtrokes, that are as prejudicial to ſociety, as they are common. Conſider the impure ſources from whence detraction ſprings (b). Recollect, that indifferent with reſpect to the ridicule of

(b) One is guilty of ſlander, becauſe he is ignorant and lazy; another, becauſe, tired of himſelf, conceitedly fond of talking, humourouſly, and ſhocked at the leaſt fault, he

of a particular perſon, the great man only employs himſelf about great things; that old and wicked appear to him as ridiculous as old and charming; that, among perſons of diſtinction, thoſe who deſerve to be great muſt ſoon be diſguſted with that taſte for ſlander, which is held in abhorrence by other nations (c): abandon it then to little minds, to whom defamation is a want. Born the enemies of thoſe of a ſuperior genius, and jealous of the eſteem they cannot attain, they know, that, like thoſe baſe plants that can only bud and grow on the ruins of palaces, they can only riſe by the fall of great reputations, and, for that reaſon, they take pains to deſtroy them.

Theſe men of contracted minds are very numerous. Formerly the people were inſpired with envy only by their equals; at preſent every one aſpires to wit, and believes that the public are intirely filled with envy at his merit. People no longer read for inſtruction; but to criticize. Now, among all works, there are none that can hold out againſt this diſpoſition of readers. Moſt of them, employed only in ſearching for faults, are like thoſe unclean animals that are ſometimes found in cities, and ramble there only to grovel in the kennels. Are they ſtill ignorant that it requires no leſs wit to diſcover the beauties than the faults of a work; and that "in "books, as an Engliſh author ſays, we ought to ſearch for ideas, and ſet "a great value on the book, when we have found a conſiderable number "of them?"

All the injuſtice of this kind is the neceſſary effect of folly. What difference, in this reſpect, is there between the conduct of a man of genius, and

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he is habitually unhappy: it is more to his humour than to his wit, that he owes the ſeverity and keenneſs of his expreſſion; *Facit indignatio verſum.* A third is naturally ſplenitic; he ſlanders his neighbours, becauſe he thinks them his enemies. O what grief to live perpetually with the objects of his hatred! He places his pride in not ſuffering them to impoſe on him: he ſees none but what are villains or diſguiſed cheats: he ſays ſo, and he frequently ſays true; but he is ſometimes deceived. Now I aſk, if we are not equally dupes, when we take vice for virtue, as when we take virtue for vice? The happy age is that in which a man is the dupe of his friends and his miſtreſſes. Wo to him whoſe prudence is not the effect of experience! A premature diſtruſt is the certain ſign of a depraved heart, and an unhappy temper. Who knows, whether he is not the moſt ſenſeleſs of all mankind, who, that he may not be the dupe of his friends, expoſes himſelf to the puniſhment of perpetual diſtruſt? People, in ſhort, defame others to ſhew their wit: it is not ſaid, that ſatirical wit is only the wit of thoſe who have none at all; but, in fact, what is the wit that only ſubſiſts in the ridicule of others, and a talent in which we cannot excel without the elogium beſtowed on wit becoming a ſatire on the heart? How can we puff ourſelves up with our ſucceſs, where, if we have preſerved any virtue, we ought every day to bluſh at thoſe ſmart ſtrokes which our vanity makes us applaud, and which it would force us to deſpiſe, were it attended with more knowlege.

(c) It is only in France and in good company, that we repreſent as a man of wit, a perſon whom they will not allow to have common ſenſe. Thus a foreigner, always ready to deprive us of a great general, an illuſtrious writer, a celebrated artiſt, or an able manufacturer, will never take from us a polite companion [*un homme du bon ton*]. Now what ſort of a wit is that, which no nation will have any thing to do with?

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that of a narrow mind? The firſt takes an advantage of every thing. There ſometimes eſcapes from a perſon of mean abilities, truths which the wiſe ſeize upon: the man of genius, who knows this, hears him without diſguſt: he commonly regards, in this converſation only, the good he has ſaid; and the man of mean abilities, what he has ſaid that is bad or ridiculous.

The man of genius, perpetually ſenſible of his ignorance, finds inſtruction in almoſt every book: on the contrary, the man of a narrow mind, too ignorant and too vain to feel the want of inſtruction, receives none from any of the works of his cotemporaries: and, to ſpeak modeſtly, he knows, he ſays, that no books can teach him any thing (d): he even goes ſo far as to maintain, that every thing has been thought of and ſaid; that authors do nothing but repeat after one another; and that they only differ in their manner of expreſſion. O ye envious! might one ſay, is it to the ancients that we owe printing, clocks, glaſs, fire-engines? Who, beſides Newton in the laſt age, fixed the laws of gravitation? Does not electricity every day afford an infinite number of new phænomena? There are, according to you, no diſcoveries left to be made: but in morality itſelf, and even in politics where every thing ought, perhaps, to have been ſaid, is the ſpecies of luxury and commerce of moſt advantage to a nation yet determined? Are their bounds fixed? Have they diſcovered the means of preſerving in a nation at the ſame time the ſpirit of commerce and that of war? Have they pointed out the form of government moſt proper to render men happy? Have they only made the romance of a good legiſlation (e), ſuch as might ſerve for a colony eſtabliſhed on ſome deſert coaſt in America?

Time in every age has preſented ſome truths to man; but many of his gifts are ſtill to be beſtowed. We may then acquire an infinite number of new ideas. The maxim, that every thing has been thought of and ſaid, is then falſe; it was invented firſt by ignorance, and has been repeated ſince by envy. There is no means which the envious, under the appearance of juſtice, do not employ to degrade merit. We know for inſtance that there is no truth that

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(d) The wiſe, ſays the Perſian proverb, know and inquire; but the ignorant do not even know what to enquire about.

(e) We do not even underſtand the principles we repeat every day: to PUNISH and REWARD is a maxim; every body knows the words, but few are acquainted with the ſenſe. Whoever could perceive its full extent, might reſolve, by the application of this principle, the problem of a perfect legiſlation. How many things of the like kind do we imagine we know and repeat every day, without underſtanding them? What a different ſignification have the ſame words in different mouths?

It is related of a young woman, in reputation for her ſanctity, that ſhe paſt whole days in prayer. The biſhop heard of it, and went to ſee her: What are then the long prayers, ſaid he, to which you conſecrate your days? I repeat my Pater-noſter, ſaid the girl. The Pater-noſter, replied the biſhop, is certainly an excellent prayer; but, in ſhort, it is ſoon ſaid. O my lord! returned the girl, what ideas of the grandeur, power and goodneſs of God are included in theſe two words, Pater-noſter! they are enough for a week's meditation.

I may ſay the ſame of certain proverbs; I compare them to tangled chains; if we get hold of an end, we may wind off all the morals and politics; but this work requires a very dexterous hand.

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ſtands alone; that every new idea has a dependance on ſome ideas already known, to which it has neceſſarily ſome reſemblance: yet from theſe reſemblances, envy daily accuſes the illuſtrious men our cotemporaries with plagiary (f): when they declame againſt plagiaries, they ſay, it is to puniſh the literary robbers, and to revenge the public. But, it might be replied, if you conſulted only the public intereſt, your declarations would not be ſo warm; you would perceive that theſe plagiaries, though leſs worthy of eſteem than the men of genius, are however of great uſe to the public; that a good work, in order to be generally known, ought to be divided into an infinite number of works, of leſs value.

In fact, if the individuals, of which the ſociety is compoſed, ought to be ranged under ſeveral claſſes, that all, in order that they may underſtand and hear, have different ears and eyes, it is evident, that the ſame writer, whatever be his genius, cannot be equally ſuitable to them, and that there ſhould be authors of all claſſes (g), ſuch as Neuville to preach in the city, and Bridaine in the country. In morality, as in politics, certain ideas are not univerſally felt, and their evidence not fully ſettled, that they have from the moſt ſublime philoſophy deſcended to poetry and from poetry, into the ſtreets: they then become common enough to be uſeful.

Moreover this envy, which ſo often aſſumes the name of juſtice, and from which no body is intirely exempt, is a vice peculiar to no nation: but it is commonly moſt active and dangerous in the vain men of little minds. The man of ſuperior abilities has but few objects of jealouſy and people of diſtinguiſhed rank are too fluctuating to obey the ſame ſenſation for a long time together: beſides, they do not hate merit, and particularly literary merit, which they often even protect: their only pretence for making uſe of ſlander, ariſes from their deſire of being agreeable, and of ſhining in converſation. In this

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(f) Under the name of love, Heſiod, for inſtance, gives us pretty nearly the idea of attraction; but in that poet it is only a vague idea: on the contrary, in Newton, it is the reſult of combinations and new calculations; Newton was then the inventor. What I ſay of Newton, I ſay equally of Locke: when Ariſtotle ſaid, NIHIL EST IN INTELLECTU QUOD NON PRIUS FUERIT IN SENSU, certainly he did not attach to this maxim the ſame ideas as Mr. Locke. This was neither more nor leſs in the Greek philoſopher, than a glimpſe of a diſcovery to be made, and the honour of it was intirely to belong to an Engliſh philoſopher. It is envy alone that makes us find in the ancients, all the diſcoveries of the moderns. A phraſe void of ſenſe, or at leaſt unintelligible before theſe diſcoveries, is ſufficient to raiſe the cry of plagiary. They do not ſay, that to perceive in a work a principle that no body had found there before, is properly making a diſcovery; that this diſcovery ſuppoſes, at leaſt, in him who made it, a great number of obſervations which led to this principle; and that, in ſhort, he who aſſembles many ideas in the ſame point of view, is a man of genius and an inventor.

(g) I ſhall mention on this ſubject a fact pleaſant enough. A man one day cauſed himſelf to be introduced to a magiſtrate, a perſon of great wit. What is your employment, ſays the magiſtrate; I compoſe books he anſwered; but none of thoſe books have yet fallen into my hands, returned the magiſtrate. I believe ſo, replied the author: I do nothing for Paris. As ſoon as one of my works is printed, I ſend the edition to America: I compoſe only for the colonies.

pretenſion properly conſiſts the ſpirit of the age: thus, there is nothing that they will not invent, to eſcape the reproach of being inſipid.

A woman who has but little wit, appears intirely taken up with her dog; ſhe ſpeaks only of him; the pride of her viſitors offend her; they tax her with impertinence, but they are to blame. She knows that a perſon makes ſome appearance in ſociety, when ſhe has pronounced a number of words (h), when ſhe has performed a number of geſtures, and made ſo much noiſe: her employment with her dog, is therefore leſs an amuſement to her, than a means of concealing the meanneſs of her abilities: ſhe is, in this reſpect, well adviſed by her ſelf-love, which, on certain occaſions, makes her put the beſt face on her folly.

I ſhall only add one word to what I have already ſaid of the ſpirit of the age; and that is, that it is eaſy to repreſent it under a ſenſible image. Let an able painter be directed, for inſtance, to make allegorical pictures of the ſpirit of one of the ages of Greece, and of the actual ſpirit of our own nation. In the firſt picture, would he not be forced to repreſent the genius and ſpirit of Greece, under the figure of a man, who, with his eyes fixed, and his ſoul abſorbed in profound meditation, remains in one of the attitudes given to the muſes? In the ſecond picture, would he not be under a neceſſity of painting the ſpirit of the French, under the appearance of the god of raillery; that is, in the figure of a man, who conſiders every thing with a malicious laugh, and an eye of ridicule? Now theſe two pictures, ſo different in themſelves, give us pretty exactly the difference between the ſpirit of the Greeks and ours. Upon which, I ſhall obſerve, that in each age an ingenious painter would give to the ſpirit of a nation different features, and that the allegorical meaning of ſuch pictures would be very agreeable and very curious with reſpect to poſterity, who, with a glance of the eye, might judge of the eſteem or contempt, which in every age ought to be granted to the ſpirit of each nation.

CHAP. VIII.

Of a true Underſtanding (a).

IN order to form conſtantly a juſt judgment on the different ideas and opinions of mankind, we ought to be exempt from all the paſſions, which miſlead the mind; we ſhould have habitually preſent to our memories, the ideas, the knowlege of which leads to that of all human truths: for this pur-

(h) On this ſubject the Perſians ſay, I hear the noiſe of mill, but I don't ſee the corn.

(a) In the extenſive ſenſe of true underſtanding is univerſal; but of this kind of underſtanding I do not treat in this chapter: I here take the word in its common acceptation.

poſe,

poſe, we ſhould know every thing. No body does know every thing: we have therefore, only in certain reſpects, a true or ſolid underſtanding.

In dramatic writing, for inſtance, one is a good judge of the harmony and propriety of the verſe, of the ſtrength of the expreſſion, and, in ſhort, of all the beauties of ſtyle; but he is no judge of the juſtneſs of the plan. Another, on the contrary, is a connoiſſeur in the laſt particular; but he is neither ſtruck with that juſtneſs, that propriety, nor that force of ſentiment, on which depends the truth of the dramatic characters, and is the firſt merit of theſe pieces. I ſay, the firſt merit, becauſe, the real utility, and conſequently the principal beauty of this kind, conſiſts in faithfully painting the effects produced by the ſtrong paſſions.

We have then properly a ſolid underſtanding only in ſuch things as have employed our thoughts.

We cannot then confound genius and an extenſive and profound knowlege with a true underſtanding, without acknowleging, that this laſt, is liable to miſtake, when it relates to thoſe complicated propoſitions, where the diſcovery of truth is the reſult of many combinations; where, to ſee diſtinctly, it is neceſſary to ſee a great deal; and where juſtneſs of thought depends on its extent: thus, we commonly underſtand by a true underſtanding, only that kind of knowlege proper to draw juſt, and ſometimes new conſequences, from thoſe opinions that are preſented to the mind, whether they are true or falſe.

In conſequence of this definition, a ſolid underſtanding contributes little to the advancement of human knowlege; however, it merits ſome eſteem. He, who departing from principles or opinions admitted, draws from thence conſequences that are always juſt, and ſometimes new, is an extraordinary man among the common people. He is even, in general, more eſteemed by men of moderate abilities, than perſons of ſuperior genius, who too often calling men to the examination of received principles, and tranſporting them into unknown regions, muſt at one and the ſame time offend their lazineſs, and wound their pride.

Beſides, however juſt the conſequences may be, that are drawn from a ſentiment, or a principle: I ſay, that far from obtaining the name of a ſolid underſtanding, the perſon will always be mentioned as a fool, if that ſentiment, or that principle, appears either ridiculous or fooliſh. A vapouriſh Indian imagined, that if he diſcarged his urine, he ſhould overflow all Biſnagar. In conſequence of this opinion, this virtuous citizen, preferring the ſafety of his country to his own health, continued to refrain from this neceſſary diſcharge; and was ready to periſh, when a phyſician, a man of wit, entered ſeemingly in a great fright into his chamber, "Narſinga (b), ſaid he, is in flames; it will ſoon be "reduced to aſhes: make haſte and let the ſtream flow." At theſe words, the good Indian reaſoned juſtly, piſſed, and paſſed for a fool (c).

If

(b) The capital of Biſnagar.

(c) Perſons of a ſolid underſtanding may conſider the cuſtom formerly practiſed, in order to decide the juſtice or injuſtice of a cauſe, by force of arms, as properly eſtabliſhed. It may appear to them the juſt conſequence of theſe two propoſitions: "Nothing happens but by the order of the "Almighty, and God cannot permit in-"juſtice." "If a diſpute aroſe in relation

If ſuch men are generally conſidered as fools, it is not ſolely from the drawing their reaſonings from falſe principles; but from principles that are reputed ſuch. In fact, the Chineſe theologian, who proves the nine incarnations of Wiſthnou; and the Muſſulman, who, after the Koran, maintains, that the earth is carried on the horns of a bull; certainly found their opinions on principles as ridiculous as thoſe of my Indian; yet each of them, in his own country, is eſteemed a perſon of ſenſe. What can be the reaſon of this? It is becauſe they maintain opinions generally received. In relation to religious truths, reaſon loſes all her force againſt two grand miſſionaries, Example and Fear. Beſides, in all countries, the prejudices of the great are the laws of the little. This Chineſe and this Muſſulman paſs then for wiſe, only becauſe they are fools of the common folly. What I have ſaid of folly, I apply to ſtupidity: he alone is mentioned as ſtupid, who has not the ſtupidity in faſhion.

Certain countrymen, it is ſaid, erected a bridge, and upon it carved this inſcription: THE PRESENT BRIDGE IS BUILT HERE: others reſolved to draw a man out of a pit, into which he had fallen, and letting down a cord with a ſlip-knot, pulled him out ſtrangled. If ſtupidity of this kind muſt always excite laughter, how can we ſeriouſly hear the doctrines of the Bonzes, the Brachmans, and Tallapoins? Doctrines as abſurd as the inſcription on the bridge. How can we without laughter, ſee the kings, the people, the miniſters, and even the great men, proſtrate themſelves ſometimes at the foot of idols, and ſhew the moſt profound veneration for ridiculous fables? How, in ſurveying voyages, can we avoid being aſtoniſhed at ſeeing the exiſtence of ſorcerers and magicians as generally believed as the exiſtence of God, and paſs among moſt nations for a truth equally certain? From what reaſon, in ſhort, do not different abſurdities, that are equally ridiculous, make the ſame impreſſion upon us? It is becauſe people freely ridicule the ſtupidity from which they think themſelves exempt, becauſe no body repeats after the countrymen, "The pre-

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"to the property of ſome land on a per-
"ſon's eſtate, if the caſe was not very clear
"on both ſides, they choſe champions to
"make it more ſo. The emperor Otho,
"about the year 968, conſulted his lawyers
"to know, if a line repreſented in a land-
"ſcape ought to be complied with: as
"they were of different opinions, they
"nominated two bravos to decide this
"point of law, and the advantage falling
"to him who fought in behalf of the re-
"preſentation, the emperor ordered that
"ſhould take place for the future." Memoirs of the Academy of Inſcriptions and Belles Lettres, tom. XV.

I might cite here, after the Memoirs of the Academy of Inſcriptions, many other examples of different trials, appointed in thoſe times of ignorance, as judgments of God. I confine myſelf to the trial of cold water: "After ſome prayers pronounced
"over the patient, they tied his right hand
"to his left foot, and his left hand to his
"right foot, and in this condition, threw
"him into the water; if he ſwam he was
"treated as a criminal, and if he ſunk he
"was declared innocent. Upon this foot-
"ing they muſt find few guilty; becauſe,
"the perſon being unable to make any
"motion, and his weight being ſupe-
"rior to that of the water contained in
"the ſame ſpace, he muſt neceſſarily ſink.
"They were doubtleſs not ignorant of ſo
"ſimple a principle of ſtatics, of which
"they made ſo common an experiment;
"but the ſimplicity of thoſe times made
"them always expect a miracle, which
"they did not think that heaven could re-
"fuſe them, when it was proper to let
"them know the truth." Ibid.

"ſent

" ſent bridge is built here :" and that the caſe is very different, when it relates to pious abſurdity. No body believing themſelves intirely free from the ignorance which produced it, they are afraid of laughing at themſelves under another's name.

It is not therefore in general to abſurdity of reaſoning, but to the abſurdities of a certain kind of reaſoning, that we give the name of ſtupidity. We cannot then underſtand by this word any thing more, than an appearance that is but little common. Thus, people ſometimes give the name of ſtupid, to thoſe whom they even allow to have a great genius. The knowlege of common things is the knowlege of common men, and ſometimes the man of genius is, in this reſpect, groſsly ignorant: eager to proceed to the firſt principles of the art or ſcience he makes his ſtudy, and contented with ſeizing ſome of thoſe new, primary, and general truths, whence flow an infinite number of ſecondary ones, he neglects all other kinds of knowlege. Does he leave the bright path traced out by his genius? he falls into a thouſand errors, and Newton writes a comment on the Apocalypſe.

Genius enlightens ſome acres of that immenſe night, which ſurround little minds; but it does not enlighten all. I compare the man of genius to the pillar which marched before the Hebrews, and was ſometimes dark and ſometimes luminous. The great man, always ſuperior in one kind of ſtudy, neceſſarily wants abilities for many others; at leaſt if we underſtand here by abilities, an aptitude for inſtruction, which perhaps may be conſidered as knowlege begun. The great man by the habit of application, the method of ſtudy, and the diſtinction he is led to make between an half-knowlege and one that is intire, has certainly, in this reſpect, a conſiderable advantage over the common rank of men. Theſe laſt, not having contracted the habit of reflection, and having known nothing deeply, believe themſelves always ſufficiently inſtructed, when they have obtained a ſuperficial knowlege. Ignorance and folly eaſily perſuade them, that they know every thing: both theſe are always attended with pride. The great man alone can be modeſt.

If I ſtreighten the empire of genius, and ſhew the bounds in which nature forces it to be encloſed, it is to make it more evidently appear, that the man of underſtanding, who is much inferior to one of genius, cannot, as is imagined, always decide with ſtrict truth, on the various ſubjects of reaſoning. Such an underſtanding is impoſſible. The property of a true underſtanding is to draw exact conſequences from received opinions: Now theſe opinions are for the moſt part falſe, and the underſtanding never proceeds ſo far as to an examination of them: a true underſtanding is then, moſt frequently, only the art of reaſoning falſely according to method: perhaps this kind of underſtanding is ſufficient to make a good judge; but it can never make a great man. Whoever is endued with it, commonly excells in no kind of ſtudy, and cannot be commended for any one talent. He often obtains, it is ſaid, the eſteem of perſons of ordinary abilities. I confeſs it: but their eſteem making him conceive too high an idea of himſelf, it becomes the ſource of errors; of errors, from which it is impoſſible for him to free himſelf. For, in fine, if the mirrour of all counſellors, the moſt poliſhed and diſcreet, cannot make a man ſenſible of his own deformity, who can diſabuſe a man, and make him quit the too high opinion he has conceived of himſelf, eſpecially when that opinion is ſupported by the eſteem of

moſt of thoſe who ſurround him? It is ſtill modeſt enough for him, not to eſteem himſelf, till after he has obtained the elogium of others. Hence ariſes that confidence, which a man of underſtanding places in his own knowlege, and that contempt for the great men whom he often regards as viſionaries, as men of ſyſtematic minds and wrong heads (d).

O ye men of ſolid underſtanding! might one ſay, when you treat as wrong-headed perſons, thoſe great men, who at leaſt are ſo ſuperior to you, in that kind of ſtudy which the public moſt admire; what opinion, think you, muſt the public have of you, whoſe abilities extend no farther than to the drawing of ſome petty conſequences, from principles that may be either true or falſe, the diſcovery of which is but of ſmall importance? Always in an extaſy at beholding your little merit, you are, you ſay, not ſubject to the errors of celebrated men. True, becauſe it is neceſſary either to run, or at leaſt to walk, before one can fall. When you boaſt of the juſtneſs of your underſtanding, methinks I hear cripples glory in making no falſe ſteps. Your conduct, you add, is often wiſer than that of the men of genius. Yes; becauſe you have not within you that principle of life and of the paſſions, which equally produces great vices, great virtues, and great talents. But are you more worthy of commendation for this? Of what importance is it to the public, whether the conduct of a particular perſon be good or bad? A man of genius, had he vices, is ſtill more worthy of eſteem than you: in fact, he ſerves his country either by the innocence of his manners, and the virtuous example he ſets, or by the knowlege he diffuſes abroad. Of theſe two ways of ſerving his country, the laſt, without doubt, moſt directly belongs to genius, and is at the ſame time, that which procures the greateſt advantages to the public. The virtuous example given by a particular perſon, is ſcarcely of uſe to any beſides the ſmall number of thoſe with whom he converſes: on the contrary, the new light the ſame perſon ſpreads over the arts and ſciences, is a benefit to the whole world. It is then certain, that the man of genius, even though his probity ſhould be very imperfect, would have a greater right than you to the gratitude of the public.

The declamations of the men of ſolid underſtanding againſt thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by their genius, muſt doubtleſs at times impoſe on the multitude: nothing is more eaſy than to deceive them. If the Spaniard, at the ſight of the ſpectacles, which ſome of his teachers conſtantly wear on their noſes, perſuades himſelf, that theſe doctors have almoſt pored themſelves blind with reading, and that they are very wiſe; if we every day take vivacity of geſture for that of wit, and taciturnity for knowlege; we may alſo take the uſual gravity of the men of underſtanding for an effect of their wiſdom. But the deluſion vaniſhes of itſelf and we ſoon call to mind that gravity, as mademoiſelle de Scudery ſays, is only a ſecret of the body, to conceal the defects of the mind (e). There are then properly none but theſe men of underſtanding, who are long dupes to the gravity they affect. Moreover, if they believe themſelves wiſe, becauſe they are ſerious, if, inſpired by pride and envy, when they decry genius, they believe

(d) Saying that a man has a wrong head, is frequently ſaying, without knowing it, he has more wit than we have.

(e) The aſs, ſays Montaigne, on this ſubject, is the moſt ſerious of all animals.

that

that it proceeds from juſtice, no body in this reſpect can eſcape from error. Theſe miſtaken ſentiments are every where ſo general, that I believe I ſhall gratify the deſire of the reader, by conſecrating to this examination ſome pages of this work.

CHAP. IX.

Of miſtaken Opinions.

LIKE a ray of light which is compoſed of a collection of rays, every ſentiment is compoſed of an infinite number of ſentiments, which concur to produce a particular volition of ſoul, and a particular action of the body. Few men have the priſm proper to ſeparate this aſſemblage of ſentiments: conſequently people often believe themſelves animated either by one ſentiment alone, or by different ſentiments, from thoſe by which they are moved. This is the cauſe of ſo many miſtaken opinions, and the reaſon why we are almoſt always ignorant of the true motives of our actions.

In order the better to ſhew the difficulty of eſcaping theſe miſtaken opinions, I ſhall repreſent ſome of the errors, in which we are involved, by a profound ignorance of ourſelves.

CHAP. X.

How far we are liable to miſtake the Motives by which we are determined.

A MOTHER idolizes her ſon; I love him, ſays ſhe, for his own ſake. However, one might reply, you take no care of his education, though you are in no doubt that a good one would contribute infinitely to his happineſs: why, therefore do not you conſult ſome men of ſenſe about him, and read ſome of the works wrote on this ſubject? Why, becauſe, ſays ſhe, I think I know as much of this matter as thoſe authors and their works. But how did you get this confidence in your own underſtanding? Is it not the effect of your indifference? An ardent deſire always inſpires us with a ſalutary diſtruſt of ourſelves. If we have a ſuit at law of conſiderable conſequence, we viſit counſellors and attorneys, we conſult a great number, and examine their advice. Are we attacked by any of thoſe lingering diſeaſes, which inceſſantly place around us the ſhades and horrors of death? We ſee phyſicians, compare their opinions, read phyſical books, we ourſelves become little phyſicians. Such is the conduct prompted

prompted by a warm intereſt. With reſpect to the education of children, if you are not influenced in the ſame manner, it is becauſe you do not love your ſon ſo well as yourſelf. But, adds the mother, what then ſhould be the motive of my tenderneſs? Among fathers and mothers, I reply, ſome are influenced by the deſire of perpetuating their name in their children; they properly love only their names: others are fond of command, and ſee in their children their ſlaves. The animal leaves its young when their weakneſs no longer keeps them in dependance; and paternal love becomes extinguiſhed in almoſt all hearts, when children have by their age or ſtation attained to independance. Then, ſaid the poet Saadi, the father ſees nothing in them but greedy heirs, and this is the cauſe, adds ſome poet, of the extraordinary love of the grand-father for his grand-children; he conſiders them as the enemies of his enemies.

There are, in ſhort, fathers and mothers, who make their children their play-things and their paſtime. The loſs of this play-thing would be inſupportable to them; but would their affliction prove that they loved the child for itſelf? Every body knows this paſſage in the life of M. de Lauzun: he was in the Baſtile; there, without books, without employment, a prey to laſſitude, and the horrors of a priſon, he took it in his head to tame a ſpider. This was the only conſolation he had left in his misfortune. The governor of the Baſtile, from an inhumanity common to men accuſtomed to ſee the unhappy (a), cruſhed the ſpider. The priſoner felt the moſt cutting grief, and no mother could be affected by the death of a ſon with a more violent ſorrow. Now whence is derived this conformity of ſentiments for ſuch different objects? It is becauſe, in the loſs of a child, or in the loſs of the ſpider, people frequently weep for nothing but for the laſſitude and want of employment into which they fall. If mothers appear in general, more afflicted at the death of a child, than fathers employed in buſineſs, or given up to the purſuit of ambition, it is not becauſe the mother loves her child more tenderly; but becauſe ſhe ſuffers a loſs more difficult to be ſupplied. The errors, in my opinion are, in this reſpect very frequent, people rarely cheriſh a child for its own ſake. That paternal love (b) of which

(a) The habit of ſeeing the unhappy, renders men cruel and mercileſs. In vain do they ſay, that they are cruel with regret, and that their duty impoſes upon them the neceſſity of being ſevere. Every man who from a regard to juſtice, can, like an executioner kill one of his own ſpecies in cold blood, would certainly aſſaſſinate for his own perſonal intereſt, was he not afraid of the hangman.

(b) What I ſay of paternal love may be applied to metaphyſical love, ſo much boaſted of in our old romances. We are in this reſpect, ſubject to many miſtaken opinions. When a perſon imagines, for inſtance, that he loves only the ſoul of a woman, it is certainly her perſon that he deſires, and here, to ſatisfy his wants, and eſpecially his curioſity, he is rendered capable of every thing. This truth may be proved from the little ſenſibility moſt ſpectators ſhew at the theatre, for the affection of a man and his wife, when the ſame ſpectators are ſo warmly moved by the love of a young man for a young woman. What can produce theſe different ſenſations, if it is not the different ſenſations themſelves have experienced in theſe two relations? Moſt of them have felt, that as they will do every thing for the favours deſired,

which ſo many men make a parade, and by which they believe themſelves ſo warmly affected, is moſt frequently nothing more than an effect, either of a deſire of perpetuating their names, of the pride of command, or the fear of laſſitude and inaction.

Such a miſtaken opinion perſuades the devout fanatics, that to their zeal for religion they owe their hatred to philoſophers, and the perſecutions they kindle againſt them. But it may be ſaid, either the opinion which ſhocks you in philoſophical work is falſe or it is true. In the firſt caſe, you ought to be animated with that mild virtue which religion ſuppoſes, and to prove philoſophically its falſehood; this you alſo owe to chriſtianity; "We require not of you, ſays St. "Paul, a blind obedience; we teach, we prove, we perſuade." In the ſecond caſe, that is, if this philoſopher's opinion be true, it is not contrary to religion: to believe that it is, would be blaſphemy. Two truths cannot be contradictory; and truth, ſays the abbe de Fleury, can never injure truth. But this opinion, the fanatical devotee will ſay, cannot be reconciled with the principles of religion. You think then, it may be replied, that every thing which reſiſts the efforts of your mind, and which you cannot reconcile with the doctrines of your religion, is really inconſiſtent with thoſe doctrines? Do you not know that Galileo (c) was unworthily dragged to the priſon of the inquiſition, for having

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fired, they will do little for the favours obtained; that in the caſe of love, curioſity being once gratified, they eaſily comfort themſelves for the loſs of one who proves unfaithful, and that then the misfortune of a lover is very ſupportable. Whence I conclude, that love can never be any thing elſe but a diſguiſed deſire of enjoyment.

(c) The perſecutors of Galileo, doubtleſs, believed that they were animated with a zeal for religion, and were the dupes of that belief. I however confeſs, that if they had been ſcrupulouſly examined and asked, Why the church reſerved to herſelf the right of puniſhing the errors of a man by the dreadful torment of fire, while ſhe grants an inviolable aſylum to crimes near the altars, and declares herſelf, in a manner, the protectreſs of aſſaſſins? If they had been farther aſked, why the ſame church by her toleration, ſeems to favour the crimes of thoſe fathers, who, without pity, mutilate their children, whom in temples, concerts, and on the ſtage they devote to the pleaſure of ſome delicate ears? and that, in fine, had they perceived, that eccleſiaſtics themſelves encourage unnatural fathers to perpetuate their crime, by permitting theſe unfortunate victims to be received into the churches, and hired to ſerve in them at a high price: they would then neceſſarily have agreed, that a religious zeal was not the only paſſion, by which they were actuated. They would have been ſenſible that churches were made a refuge for criminals only to preſerve, by this means, a greater credit with an infinite number of men, who would look with reſpect upon the monks, as the only protectors that could ſave them from the rigour of the laws; that they puniſhed Galileo for the diſcovery of a new ſyſtem, only to be revenged for the involuntary injury done them by a great man, who, perhaps, by enlightening the human race and appearing more learned than the clergy, might leſſen their credit with the people. It is true, that, even in Italy, people recollect with horror the treatment of the philoſopher by the inquiſition. As a proof of this truth, I quote part of the poem of the prieſt Benedetto Menzini, printed and publicly ſold at Florence. The poet addreſſes himſelf to the inquiſitors, who condemned Galileo: "What, ſays he, was "your blindneſs, when you unworthily "dragged this great man to your dungeon? "Is this the pacific ſpirit recommended

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having maintained that the ſun is placed in the centre, and does not move round the earth; that his ſyſtem firſt offended the weak, and appeared directly contrary to that text of Scripture, "Sun ſtand thou ſtill?" However, able divines have ſince made Galileo's principles agree with thoſe of religion. Who has told you, that a divine more happy, or more enlightened than you, will not remove the contradiction, which you think you perceive between your religion, and the opinion you reſolve to condemn? Who forces you by a precipitate cenſure to expoſe, if not religion, at leaſt its miniſters, to the hatred excited by perſecution? Why always borrowing the aſſiſtance of force and terror, would you impoſe ſilence on men of genius, and deprive mankind of the uſeful knowlege they are capable of diſpenſing?

You obey, you ſay, the dictates of religion. But it commands you to diſtruſt yourſelves, and to love your neighbour. If you do not act in conformity to theſe principles, you are then not actuated by the ſpirit of God (d). But you ſay, by who then are we inſpired? By lazineſs and pride. It is lazineſs, the enemy of thought, which makes you averſe to thoſe opinions, which you cannot, without ſtudy and ſome fatigue of attention, unite with the principles received in the ſchools; but which being proved to be philoſophically true, cannot be theologically falſe.

It is pride which is ordinarily carried to a great height in the bigot, than in any other perſon, which makes him deteſt in the man of genius, the benefactor of the human race, and which exaſperates him againſt the truths diſcovered by humility.

It is then this lazineſs, and this pride, which, diſguiſing themſelves (e) under the appearance of zeal (f) renders them the perſecutors of men of learning;

"to you by that holy apoſtle, who died in "exile at Patmos? No: you were always "deaf to his precepts. Let us perſecute "the wiſe; this is your maxim. Proud "mortals, under an exterior that inſpires "only humility, you, who ſpeak with ſo "ſoft a voice, and yet dip your hands in "blood; what miſchievous demon intro-"duced you among us?"

(d) If the ſame devout fanatic, mild in China, and cruel at Liſbon, preaches in different countries tolleration, or perſecution, according as he is there more or leſs powerful; how can he reconcile ſuch a contradictory conduct, with the ſpirit of the goſpel; and not perceive, that under the name of religion, he is inſpired by the pride of command?

(e) If we except luxury, of all the ſins moſt prejudicial to mankind; but which conſiſts in an act which it is impoſſible to conceal from ourſelves, though we are under an illuſion with reſpect to all the reſt. Every other vice we transform into ſo many virtues. We take the deſire of grandeur, for elevation of ſoul; avarice, for oeconomy; defamation, for the love of truth; and an ill-humour for a laudable zeal. Thus moſt of theſe paſſions, are pretty commonly allied to bigotry.

(f) Thoſe divines who believe, that the popes have a right to diſpoſe of thrones, alſo imagine themſelves animated with a pure zeal for religion. They do not perceive that a ſecret motive of ambition is blended with the ſanctity of their intentions; that the only means of commanding kings, is to conſecrate the opinion, that gives the pope a right to depoſe them, in caſe of hereſy. Now eccleſiaſtics being the ſole judges of hereſy, the court of Rome, ſays the abbe de Longuerue, have made uſe of it at their pleaſure, againſt all the princes who diſpleaſe them.

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and which in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, have forged chains, built gibbets, and held the torch to the piles of the inquiſition.

Thus the ſame pride, which is ſo formidable in the devout fanatic, and which in all religions makes him perſecute, in the name of the Moſt High, the men of genius, ſometimes arms againſt them the men in power.

After the example of thoſe Phariſees, who treated as criminals the perſons who did not adopt all their deciſions, how many viſiers treat as enemies to the nation, thoſe who do not blindly approve their conduct! Drawn into this error, by a miſtaken opinion common to almoſt all makind, there is no viſier, who does not take his intereſt for that of the nation; who does not maintain, without knowing it, that to humble his pride, is to inſult the public; and that to blame his conduct, with whatever precaution it be done, is to excite diſturbances in the ſtate. But you deceive yourſelves, it may be replied, for in forming this judgment, you conſult only your vanity, and not the general intereſt. Are you ignorant, that a virtuous citizen, can never ſee with indifference, the evils occaſioned by a bad adminiſtration? As legiſlation is the moſt uſeful of all the ſciences, ought it not, like every other ſcience, to be improved by the ſame means? Is it not by removing the errors of Ariſtotle, Averroes, Avicenna, and all the inventors in the ſciences and arts, that people have improved theſe arts, and theſe ſciences. To reſolve to cover the faults of the adminiſtration with the veil of ſilence, is then to oppoſe the progreſs of the legiſlation, and conſequently the happineſs of mankind. It is the ſame pride, masked under the name of the public welfare, which makes you advance this maxim, that a fault being once committed, the divan ought always to maintain it, and that authority ought not to ſubmit. But if the public welfare is the principal object propoſed by every prince, and every government, ought they to make uſe of authority in the ſupport of folly? The maxim you eſtabliſh, can only ſignify, I have given my advice, and would not, by ſuffering the prince to be informed of the neceſſity of changing his conduct, clearly prove to him, that I have given him bad counſel.

There are few men who eſcape illuſions of this kind. How many perſons who have good intentions, are diſhoneſt for want of examining themſelves! If there are ſome to whom the bodies of others, if I may uſe the term, are diaphanous, and who equally penetrate into their hearts, and into their own, the number of theſe is but ſmall. In order to obtain a true knowledge of ourſelves, we ſhould obſerve, and for a long time ſtudy our own hearts. The perſons of ſtrict morals, are the only perſons who concern themſelves about this examination; moſt other men are ignorant of this ſtudy.

Among thoſe who declaim with ſuch heat, againſt the ſingularities of men of wit, how many are there who believe themſelves ſolely animated by the love of juſtice and truth! However, let me ask, why do you attack with ſuch fury a ridicule, which is frequently attended with no injury to any one? A man affects ſingularity? Laugh at him, and welcome: you would thus behave to a perſon without merit, and why ſhould you not treat a man of genius in the ſame manner? It is becauſe his ſingularity attracts the attention of the public: now their attention being once fixed upon a perſon of merit, it is employed about him, they forget you, and your pride is wounded. This is the ſecret principle, both

of the reſpect you affect to ſhew for the cuſtoms of the world, and of your hatred of ſingularity.

You will tell me, perhaps, that what is extraordinary makes an impreſſion, and that this adds to the fame of the man of wit; that ſimple and modeſt merit is leſs eſteemed, which is an injuſtice you are willing to revenge, by decrying ſingularity. But does envy, I reply, prevent your perceiving where affectation is, and where it is not? In general, men of ſuperior abilities are but little ſubject to it; a lazy and thoughtful diſpoſition may be attended with ſingularity, but will never produce much appearance of it. The affectation of ſingularity is then very uncommon.

What activity does it require to ſupport a ſingular character? What knowlege of the world muſt ſuch a perſon have, nicely to chuſe ſuch a ridicule as will render him neither deſpicable, nor odious, to other men; to adapt that ridicule to his character, and proportion it to his merit? For, in ſhort, it is only a particular degree of genius that is allowed to be particularly ridiculous. Have we this; we may make uſe of it, the ridicule far from injuring us, is of ſervice. When Æneas deſcended into hell, in order to pacify the monſter that watched at its gates, that hero, by the advice of the Sybil, provided himſelf with a cake, which he toſſed into the mouth of Cerberus. Who knows whether merit, in order to appeaſe the hatred of its cotemporaries, ought not thus to caſt into the mouth of envy the cake of ridicule? Prudence requires this, and even human nature renders it neceſſary. If there appeared a perfect man, it would be neceſſary for him by ſome great follies to ſoften the hatred of his fellow-citizens. It is true, that in this reſpect we may truſt to nature, ſince ſhe has provided every man with a ſufficient number of faults to render him ſupportable.

A certain proof, namely envy, under the name of juſtice, is let looſe againſt the follies of men of genius, ſo that all their ſingularity does not offend us. A groſs ſingularity, that flatters the vanity of a man of moderate abilities, by making him perceive, that the man of merit has faults, from which he is exempt, by perſuading him that all men of genius are fools, and that he alone is wiſe, is a ſingularity always very proper to conciliate his good-will. Let a man of genius, for inſtance, dreſs himſelf in a particular manner, moſt men who do not diſtinguiſh wiſdom from folly, and know it only by the length of a peruke, will take him for a fool; they will laugh at him; but like him the better for it. In exchange for the pleaſure they find in ridiculing him, they will freely allow him the praiſe that is his due. People cannot frequently laugh at a man, without talking much of him. Now this, which would ruin a fool, increaſes the reputation of a man of merit. They do not laugh at him without acknowledging, and perhaps, even exaggerating his ſuperiority, with reſpect to his diſtinguiſhing excellence; and by outrageous declamations, the envious, unknown to themſelves, even contribute to his glory. What gratitude do I owe you? will the man of genius freely ſay, your hatred makes me friends! The public will not long be deceived by the motives of your anger: you are offended, not by my ſingularity, but at my reputation. If you dared, you would like me be ſingular: but, you know, that an affected ſingularity is extremely flat in a man without wit; your inſtinct informs you, either that you have not, or at leaſt

leaſt that the public does not grant you, the merit neceſſary to appear particular. This is the true cauſe of your abhorrence of ſingularity (g). You reſemble thoſe artful women, who, inceſſantly exclaiming againſt the indecency of all modern dreſſes proper to ſhew the ſhape, do not perceive, that they owe their reſpect for ancient faſhions only to their perſonal deformity.

Whatever we have that is ridiculous, we always conceal from ourſelves, we only perceive it in others. I ſhall mention on this ſubject a fact pleaſant enough, which is ſaid to have happened in our days. The duke of Lorrain gave a grand entertainment to his whole court. The ſupper was ſerved up in a veſtibule, which opened on a parterre. In the midſt of the ſupper, a lady thought ſhe ſaw a ſpider: ſhe was ſeized with fear, ſcreamed out, left the table, fled into the garden, and fell down on the graſs. At the moment of her fall, ſhe heard ſomebody near her; this was the duke's prime miniſter. "O ſir," ſaid ſhe, "you revive my courage, how much am I obliged to you! I was affraid I had "been guilty of an impertinence." "O madam, who could ſtay there," replied the miniſter: "but tell me, was it a very large one?" "Dear ſir, it was "quite frightful." "Did it fly near me?" added he. "What do you mean? "the ſpider fly?" "How," returned he, "is it only for a ſpider that you "make all this to do? Go, madam, you are very weak: I thought it had "been a batt." This fact is the hiſtory of all mankind. We cannot ſupport our own ridicule in another; we reciprocally offer abuſe, and in this world it is always abſurdity that laughs at folly. Thus, after Solomon, one is always tempted to cry out, All is vanity. On this vanity depends moſt of our miſtaken opinions. But as it is more particularly in affairs of advice, that theſe miſtakes are more eaſily perceived, after having expoſed ſome of the errors, into which we are thrown by a profound ignorance of ourſelves; it muſt ſtill be of uſe to ſhew the errors into which we are ſometimes precipitated by the ignorance of others.

(g) To the ſame cauſe we ought to attribute, the love which almoſt all fools affect to have for probity, when they ſay, we fly the men of wit, they are bad company, and dangerous men. But it may be ſaid, the church, the court, the magiſtracy, and the treaſury furniſh men as worthy of cenſure as the academies. Moſt men of learning, have not even an inclination to become knaves. Beſides, the deſire of eſteem, which always ſuppoſes the love of ſtudy, ſerves them, in this reſpect, as a preſervative. Among the men of learning, there are few whoſe probity is not confirmed by ſome virtuous actions. But even ſuppoſing them as great cheats as the blockheads, the qualities of the mind may at leaſt compenſate for the vices of the heart; but the fool has nothing to attone for them. Why then do they fly from the men of genius? It is becauſe they are humbled by their preſence, and take that for a love of virtue, which is only an averſion to perſons of ſuperior abilities.

CHAP. XI.

Of Advice.

EVERY man whom we conſult, always believes that his counſel is dictated by friendſhip. He ſays ſo; moſt men believe him upon his word, and their blind confidence but too often leads them into error. It would however, be very eaſy to undeceive ourſelves in this particular; for we love but few people, and would adviſe all the world. From whence does this madneſs of giving advice derive its ſource? From our vanity. Moſt men have the folly to believe themſelves wiſe, and much more ſo than their neighbours, and therefore they are pleaſed with every thing that confirms this opinion. Whoever conſults us, is agreeable to us, for this is a confeſſion of inferiority which flatters our vanity. Beſides, what opportunities does our being conſulted, give us to diſplay our maxims, our ideas, and our ſentiments, to talk much of ourſelves, and to our own advantage? Thus there is nobody who does not take advantage of it. More employed about the intereſt of our vanity, than about the intereſt of the perſon who comes to conſult us, he commonly leaves us without being inſtructed, or enlightened; and our counſels have been our own panegyric. Thus our advice is almoſt conſtantly dictated by vanity; and hence we would correct all the world.

Upon this ſubject, a philoſopher replied, to one of theſe perſons eager to give his advice; "How ſhould I correct my faults, when thou thyſelf haſt not "corrected the deſire of giving correction?" If it was in fact friendſhip alone that gave counſel, this, like all other lively paſſions, would make known when, and how, we ought to give advice. In the caſe of ignorance, for example, there is no doubt but advice may be very uſeful: a phyſician, a counſellor, a philoſopher, and a politician, may each, in their ſeparate profeſſions, give excellent advice. In every other caſe it is uſeleſs, and often even ridiculous, becauſe people, in general, always propoſe themſelves for a model.

Let an ambitious man conſult a perſon of moderate deſires, and propoſe to him his views and projects: abandon them, the latter will ſay; do not expoſe youſelf to dangers and vexations without number; but deliver yourſelf to ſweet and peaceful employments. To this the ambitious man will reply, If I had ſtill my choice to make, I might follow your advice: but my paſſions are fixed, my character formed, and my habits ſettled. I would make the beſt of them, ſo as to promote my own happineſs; and upon this point I would conſult you. In vain would he add, that the character being once formed, it is impoſſible to change it; that the pleaſures of a man of moderate deſires, are inſipid to one filled with ambition; and the miniſter diſgraced, would die with laſſitude and inaction. Whatever reaſon he alleged, the man of moderate abilities would conſtantly repeat, You ought not to be ambitious. Methinks, I hear a phyſician ſay to his patient, Sir, do not have a fever.

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The old men conſtantly uſe the ſame language. When a young man conſults them, in regard to the conduct he ought to obſerve: Fly, ſay they, plays, operas, balls, the aſſemblies of the women, and every frivolous amuſement: imitate us, and employ yourſelf intirely about making your fortune. But the young man will reply, I am ſtill fond of pleaſure, I love women to diſtraction, how then ſhall I renounce them? You muſt be ſenſible that at my age, this pleaſure is an appetite. Whatever he can ſay, an old man will never comprehend, that the enjoyment of a woman is ſo neceſſary to the happineſs of a young man. Every ſenſation, which we do not experience, we cannot allow to exiſt. The old man no longer ſeeks pleaſure, and pleaſure no longer ſeeks him. The objects with which he was inceſſantly employed in his youth, inſenſibly retire from his ſight. Man then may be compared to a veſſel that ſails with a fair wind in a high ſea; it gradually loſes ſight of the perſons that ſtand on the ſhore, and ſoon diſappears from their eyes. Whoever conſiders the ardour with which men propoſe themſelves for models, may imagine, that he ſees a number of perſons ſwiming upon a great lake, and being carried by different currents, lift up their heads above the water, crying to each other, It is me you muſt follow, and there you muſt land. Held faſt by chains of braſs, fixed to a rock, the wiſe-man contemplates their folly, crying, Do you not ſee, that, drawn by different currents, you cannot land at the ſame place? To adviſe a man to ſay this, or to do that, is commonly nothing more than, I would act in that manner, or I would ſpeak thus. Thus the words in Moliere, "You are a goldſmith, maſter Joſſe;" applied to the pride of ſetting ourſelves up for an example, is more general than is imagined. There is not a blockhead, but would take upon himſelf to direct the conduct of the man of the greateſt genius (a). Methinks, I ſee the chief of the Natches (b), who every morning, at the riſing of Aurora, walks out of his cabbin, and marks out for the ſun, his brother, the courſe he is to take.

But, ſay you, the man who is conſulted may, doubtleſs, be under an illuſion, and attribute to friendſhip what is only the effect of vanity; but how can this illuſion paſs upon him who conſults him? Why is not he in this reſpect enlightened by his own intereſt? It is becauſe he readily believes, that others take an intereſt in his concerns, which they really do not; becauſe moſt men are weak, and not being able to conduct themſelves, they have occaſion for others to mark out their conduct, and it is very eaſy, as obſervation proves, to communicate to ſuch a perſon the high opinion the adviſer has of himſelf. This is not the caſe with one who has a firm mind. If he conſults, it is becauſe he is ignorant: he knows that in every other caſe, and particularly what relates to his own happineſs, he ought to conſult none but his own judgment. In fact, if the goodneſs of advice depends upon an exact knowlege of the circumſtances, in which thoſe whom we adviſe are placed, to whom can a man better apply, than to himſelf? As a warm intereſt enlightens us with reſpect to all the ſubjects of our inquiries,

(a) He who is not an equerry, gives no advice about breaking horſes. But we are not ſo diffident in caſes of morality: without having ſtudied it, we believe ourſelves very learned, and able to give advice to the whole world.

(b) A ſavage nation.

who

who can be more enlightened than we, in regard to our own happineſs? Who knows whether on the characters being formed, and the habits fixed, each perſon is not able to conduct himſelf as well as poſſible, even though he ſhould appear a fool? Every body knows the anſwer of a famous oculiſt: a countryman went to conſult him, and found him ſitting at table, eating and drinking heartily: "What muſt I do for my eyes?" ſaid the peaſant, "You muſt abſtain from wine," replied the oculiſt. "But it ſeems to me," returned the peaſant, walking up nearer to him, "that your eyes are not much better than "mine, and yet you drink. "Truly," replied the oculiſt, "that is becauſe I am fonder of drinking than of being cured. How many men are there, like this oculiſt, whoſe happineſs depends on paſſions that muſt plunge them in the greateſt miſery; and yet however, if I may venture to ſay ſo, would be fools did they endeavour to be more wiſe. There are men, and experience has ſhewn that they are pretty numerous, who are ſo miſerable, that they can no otherwiſe be happy than by performing actions that lead to the grave (c). But it may be anſwered, there are alſo men who, for want of wiſe advice, daily commit the groſſeſt faults; and good advice, doubtleſs, might make them eſcape theſe misfortunes. But, I ſay, that they would commit more conſiderable ones ſtill, if they gave themſelves up inconſiderately to the counſels of others. Whoever blindly follows them, muſt obſerve a conduct full of inconſiſtences, commonly more fatal than the exceſs even of the paſſions.

A perſon by abandoning himſelf to his diſpoſition ſpares at leaſt, the uſeleſs efforts he might make to reſiſt it. However violent the tempeſt may be, when we ſail before the wind we ſupport without fatigue the impetuoſity of the ſea: but if we reſolve to ſtruggle againſt the waves, and turn the ſide of the veſſel to the ſtorm, we ſhall always find the ſea more rough and dangerous.

Inconſiderate advice precipitates us too often into the abyſs of misfortune. Hence we ought often to call to mind this ſaying of Socrates: "May I," ſays that philoſopher, "always be on my guard againſt my maſters, and my "friends, conſtantly preſerve my ſoul in a tranquil ſituation, and obey none "but reaſon, the beſt of counſellors!" Whoever hears reaſon, is not only deaf to bad counſel, but alſo weighs in the ballance of doubt the counſels even of thoſe men who are reſpectable by their age, their dignity, and their merit, yet conſider themſelves as of too much importance, and, like the hero of Cervantes, have a corner of folly, to which they would bring every thing.

If advice is ever uſeful, it is when it puts us in a condition to judge better for ourſelves: if it is prudent to deſire it, it is only ſo when it is asked of thoſe wiſemen (d), who, knowing the ſcarcity and value of good counſel, are very frugal in giving it. In fact, in order to give ſuch as will be of uſe, it requires the greateſt care to dive into the character of the man: what knowledge is

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(c) If, as Paſcal ſays, habit is a ſecond, and perhaps a firſt nature, it muſt be acknowleged, that a guilty habit once confirmed, will laſt as long as life.

(d) Every age, perhaps, produces not above five or ſix men of this kind; and yet in morals, as well as in phyſic, we conſult the firſt good woman. We do not ſay that morality, like each of the other ſciences, requires much ſtudy and reflection. Every one believes that he underſtands it, becauſe there is no public ſchool in which it is to be learned.

neceſſary

neceſſary for the adviſer to have of his taſte, his inclinations, the ſenſations by which he is animated, and the degree of thoſe inward feelings by which he is affected? What skill to foreſee the faults he would commit and the circumſtances in which he may be placed by fortune, and to judge in conſequence of this, whether the fault he would correct, would not be changed into a virtue, in the ſtation in which he will probably be placed? This is the picture of thoſe difficulties which render the wiſe ſo reſerved on the article of giving advice. Thus it is only of thoſe, who ſcarce even give any, that we ought to demand it. All other counſels may be juſtly ſuſpected.

But is there any mark by which we may know the counſels of a wiſe man? Yes, doubtleſs, there are. All the paſſions have a different language. We may then from the advice itſelf form a judgment of the motive from which it was given. In moſt men, as I have ſaid above, it is dictated by pride; and the counſels of pride, which are always humbling, are ſcarcely ever followed. Pride gives them; pride reſiſts them. It is the anvil which makes the hammer fly back. The art of making them reliſhed, which of all the arts among mankind is, perhaps, the leaſt improved, is abſolutely unknown to pride. It does not examine: its counſels, and its deciſions are proofs of its ignorance. Mortals, cries the proud man, liſten to me: ſuperior in underſtanding to others, I ſpeak, let them attend, and rely on my knowlege: to reply is to offend me. Thus always full of a profound reſpect for himſelf, whoever reſiſts his advice is a conceited fellow, who wanted flatterers and not friends. Vain man, might they reply, on whom ought this reproach to fall but on thyſelf, who behaves with ſuch violence to thoſe, who do not, by a blind deference to thy deciſions, flatter thy preſumption? Learn that it is thy ill temper that ſaves thee from the vice of flattery. Beſides, what would'ſt thou mean by that love of flattery, with which all men reciprocally reproach each other, and of which particularly the great, and principally kings, are accuſed? Every body, doubtleſs, hates praiſe when he believes it to be falſe: people then love flatterers only in the quality of ſincere admirers. Under this it is impoſſible not to love them, becauſe every one believes that his actions are laudable and worthy of praiſe. Whoever diſdains elogiums, ſuffers at leaſt people to praiſe him on this account. When they deteſt the flatterer, it is becauſe they know him to be ſuch. In flattery it is not then the praiſe, but the falſhood which ſhocks us. If the man of abilities appears leſs ſenſible of elogiums, it is becauſe he more frequently perceives their falſhood: but let an artful flatterer praiſe him, perſiſt in praiſing him, and ſometimes ſeem to mingle blame with the elogiums he beſtows, the man of genius will, ſooner or latter, be his dupe. From the artiſt to the prince, every one loves praiſe, and conſequently delicate flattery.

But it may be asked, have not kings been ſeen to bear with gratitude, the ſevere repreſentations of a virtuous counſellor? Yes, without doubt; but theſe princes were jealous of their glory; they were warmly deſirous of promoting the public welfare; and this diſpoſition forced them to invite to their courts, men animated by the ſame paſſion, that is, men who would give them no counſels but what were favourable to the people. Now if ſuch counſellors flatter a virtuous prince, at leaſt in the object of his paſſion, if they do not always flatter him in the means he makes uſe of to ſatisfy it, ſuch a liberty cannot offend him. I ſay more, ſuch a truth may ſometimes flatter him: it is the pleaſing blow of a miſtreſs.

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Let a man go to a miſer and tell him, you are to blame, you place your money out very badly; if you was to employ it in ſuch a manner, you would find your account in it: far from being ſhocked at ſuch frankneſs, the miſer would be pleaſed with the author of it. In diſapproving his conduct, he flatters him in what is moſt dear to him, that is in the object of his paſſion. Now what I ſay of the miſer may be applied to the virtuous king.

In regard to a prince who is not in love with glory, or the public welfare, this prince can draw to his court none but ſuch men as may inſtruct him in relation to the objects of his deſires; as his taſte, his prejudices, his views, his projects, and his pleaſures: he will then be ſurrounded by none but vicious men, to whom the public diſlike gives the name of flatterers (e). All virtuous men fly far from him. To require that they ſhould aſſemble about his throne, would be to demand an impoſſibility, and to reſolve to produce an effect without a cauſe. Tyrants and great princes ought to determine themſelves by the ſame motives, in the choice of their friends; they differ only in the paſſion by which they are animated.

Every man would then be praiſed and flattered; but all would not have it done in the ſame manner; and it is only in this particular that the difference between them conſiſts. The proud are not free from this deſire: what ſtronger proof can there be of this, than the haughtineſs with which they decide, and the blind ſubmiſſion they require? It is not thus with the wiſe man: his ſelf-love is not ſhewn in a inſolent manner; and if he gives advice, he does not require that it ſhould be followed. Sound reaſon always ſuſpects that it has not conſidered an object in all its views. Thus in theſe counſels are always found ſome expreſſions of doubt proper to ſhew the ſituation of the mind. Such are theſe phraſes: I believe that you ought to conduct yourſelf in ſuch a manner: ſuch is my advice: ſuch the motives on which I form my opinion: but adopt nothing without examination, &c. From this manner of giving advice, we may diſcover the wiſe man: he alone can ſucceed with men of abilities; and if he has not always the ſame ſucceſs with men of meaner intellects, it is becauſe theſe laſt, being often uncertain, require a perſon to put an end to their irreſolution, and determine for them; they confide more in folly, delivered with a firm voice, than in the wiſdom that ſpeaks with heſitation.

The friendſhip which adviſes, aſſumes nearly the ſame voice with that of wiſdom, it only unites the expreſſion of that paſſion with that of doubt. Is the advice reſiſted, or does the friend proceed ſo far as to deſpiſe it? It then makes itſelf better known, and after having made its repreſentations, it cries with Pylades, "Let us go, my lord, let us carry off Hermione."

Every paſſion has then its turns, its expreſſion, and its particular manner: therefore, the man who by an exact analyſis of the phraſes and expreſſions uſed by the different paſſions, ſhould give the ſigns by which we might know them, would doubtleſs highly deſerve the gratitude of the public. Then we might,

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(e) Moſt princes, ſays the poet Saadi, are ſo indifferent with reſpect to good counſel, and have ſo ſeldom need of virtuous friends, that it is always a ſign of a public calamity, when theſe virtuous men appear at court. They are never called but in an extremity, and commonly at the inſtant when the ſtate is without reſource.

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from the multitude of ſenſations produced by each act of the will, diſtinguiſh, at leaſt, that which rules over us. Till that time men will be ignorant of themſelves, and will fall into the groſſeſt errors.

CHAP. XII.

Of Good Senſe.

THE difference between wit and good ſenſe, proceeds from the different cauſes by which they are produced. The one is the effect of ſtrong paſſions, and the other of the abſence of thoſe very paſſions. The man of good ſenſe does not commonly fall into any of thoſe errors into which we are drawn by the paſſions; neither does he receive any of thoſe beams of light that are owing to warm paſſions. In the current of life, and in ſuch things where a perfect view may be obtained by an indifferent eye, the man of good ſenſe does not deceive himſelf in relation to thoſe queſtions that are a little complicated, where, in order to perceive and diſcover the truth, ſome efforts muſt be made, and ſome fatigue of attention endured; the man of good ſenſe is blind: deprived of the paſſions, he finds himſelf at the ſame time deprived of that courage, of that activity of ſoul, and of that continued attention which alone can enlighten him. Senſe ſuppoſes then no invention, nor conſequently any wit: and here, if I may venture to uſe the term, ſenſe ends where wit begins (a).

We ought not, however, to conclude from hence, that good ſenſe is ſo very common. The men without paſſions are rare. Solid judgment, which of all the faculties of the mind, is, beyond contradiction, the neareſt to good ſenſe, is not free from the paſſions. Beſides, the blockheads are not leſs ſuſceptible of them, than the men of wit. If all pretend to good ſenſe, and even aſſume the character, we ſhall not believe them upon their word. M. Diafoirus ſays, "I "judge by the heavineſs of my ſon's imagination, that he will in time have a "good judgment." People always want good ſenſe, when they have no other pretenſions to it than their want of wit.

Is the body politic ſound? The men of good ſenſe may be called to great places, and fill them worthily: but if the ſtate is attacked by a diſeaſe, the men of good ſenſe are extremely dangerous. Mediocrity preſerves things in the ſtate in which it found them. Every thing is left to go on as it will: the ſilence of theſe people conceals the progreſs of the evil, and oppoſes the effectual remedies that might be brought againſt it: they commonly do not make known the diſeaſe till it is become incurable. In regard to thoſe ſecondary places, where they are not intruſted with the management, but the punctual execution, they

(a) It will be found, that I here diſtinguiſh wit from good ſenſe, which are ſometimes confounded in the ordinary uſe of theſe words.

are commonly very proper for them. The only faults they commit are thoſe of ignorance, which, in inferior places, are almoſt conſtantly of little importance. As to their particular conduct, it is not maſterly, but it is always reaſonable. The abſence of the paſſions preventing all the light derived from theſe paſſions, makes them at the ſame time avoid all the errors to which the paſſions would precipitate them. Senſible men are in general more happy than thoſe influenced by ſtrong paſſions: in the mean time, the indifference of the firſt renders them leſs happy than the man of an amiable diſpoſition, who, being born ſenſible, has by age and reflection weakened that ſenſibility; but his heart is ſtill open to the weakneſs of others: his ſenſibility revives for them, and he enjoys the pleaſure of being ſenſible without being leſs happy. Thus he is more amiable in the eyes of all his fellow-citizens, who are pleaſed with his weakneſs.

However rare good ſenſe may be, the advantages it procures are only perſonal, they cannot be extended to the human race. The man of good ſenſe cannot pretend to the public gratitude, nor conſequently to glory. But prudence, it is is ſaid, which is one of the attendants of good ſenſe, is a virtue which it is for the advantage of all nations to honour. This prudence, ſo boaſted of, and ſometimes ſo uſeful to individuals, is not, with reſpect to a whole nation, a virtue ſo derivable as is imagined. Of all the gifts heaven could beſtow upon a people, the moſt fatal, without diſpute would be that of prudence, if it was rendered common to all the citizens. What, in fact, is the prudent man? He who keeps evils at a diſtance; an image ſtrong enough for what balances in his mind the preſence of a pleaſure that would be fatal to him. Now let us ſuppoſe, that prudence was to deſcend on all the heads that compoſe a nation: where would be found the men who, for five pence a day, would in battle confront death, fatigue, and diſeaſes? What woman would preſent herſelf at the altar of Hymen to expoſe herſelf to the trouble of child-bearing, to the pain and danger of delivery, to the humours and contradiction of a huſband, and to the vexations occaſioned by the death or ill conduct of children? What men, in conſequence of the principles of his religion, would not deſpiſe the fleeting pleaſures of this world, and intirely devoting himſelf to the care of his ſalvation, ſeek only in an auſtere life the means of increaſing the felicity that is to be the reward of ſanctity? What man would not chuſe, in conſequence of this, the moſt perfect ſtate, and that in which his ſalvation would be leaſt expoſed; would he not prefer the palm of celibacy to the myrtles of love, and bury himſelf in a monaſtery (b)? It is then to imprudence that poſterity owes its exiſtence. It is the preſence of pleaſure, its all-powerful view, that braves diſtant misfortune, and deſtroys foreſight: it is, therefore, to imprudence and folly that heaven attaches the preſervation of empires, and the duration

(b) When it was inquired in China, whether the miſſionaries ſhould be allowed to preach freely the Chriſtian religion, it is ſaid, the men of letters, aſſembled on this ſubject, ſaw no danger in it. They did not foreſee, ſaid they, that a religion, in which celibacy is the moſt perfect ſtate, could be very extenſive.

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of the world. It appears that, according to the actual conſtitution of moſt governments, prudence is only deſirable in a very ſmall number of citizens; that reaſon, a ſynonimous word to good ſenſe, and ſo much boaſted of by mankind, deſerves but little eſteem; that the wiſdom, which is ſuppoſed to belong to it, tends to inaction; and that its apparent infallibility is often no more than an apathy. I, however, confeſs that the title of a perſon of good ſenſe, uſurped by an infinite number of people, certainly does not belong to them.

If we ſay of almoſt all the ſtupid, that they are men of good ſenſe, it is, in this reſpect, with them as with the ordinary women, who are always mentioned as mighty good. We freely boaſt of the merit of thoſe who have none: we repreſent them in the moſt favourable light, and perſons of ſuperior abilities in a light the moſt diſadvantageous. How many men beſtow the greateſt praiſes on good ſenſe, which they place above wit? In reality every one would place a higher eſteem on himſelf than on others, and the men of moderate abilities, perceiving that they are nearer to good ſenſe than to wit, ſet little value upon the latter, and conſider it as a trifling endowment: and hence the proverb is ſo often repeated by men of moderate abilities: "An ounce of good ſenſe is worth a pound of wit;" a phraſe by which every one of them would inſinuate, that at the bottom they have more wit than any of our celebrated men.

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Spirit of Conduct.

THE common object of men's deſires is happineſs: and it is the buſineſs of conduct, or the art of conducting themſelves, that renders them happy. This art appears leſs an endowment of the mind, than an effect of wiſdom, of the regulation of our temper, and the moderation of our deſires. The greateſt part of mankind, tormented by their paſſions, or languiſhing under the calm of laſſitude, may be compared, the firſt to a veſſel buffeted by the tempeſts of the north, and the ſecond to a ſhip ſtopped by a calm in the midſt of the ſeas of the torrid zone. To her aſſiſtance, one calls upon the calm, and the other upon the winds. In order to ſail happily, it is neceſſary for them to be driven by a wind that is always equal. But all I might ſay, in this reſpect, on happineſs, would have no relation to the ſubject on which I treat.

People have hitherto underſtood by the ſpirit of conduct, only the art of guiding themſelves to the various objects they have in purſuit.

In a republic, ſuch as that of the Romans, and in every government where the people are the diſtributers of favours, and where honours are the reward of merit, the ſpirit of conduct is nothing leſs than genius and great abili-

ties. This is not the caſe in governments where favours are in the hands of men, whoſe greatneſs is independent of the public happineſs: in theſe countries the ſpirit which directs the conduct, is only the art of becoming uſeful or agreeable to the diſpenſers of favours; and it is leſs to his ſpirit, than to his turn of mind, that a man commonly owes this advantage. The moſt favourable and moſt neceſſary diſpoſition for ſucceeding with the great, is a temper pliable to all characters and circumſtances. Was a man void of abilities, ſuch a diſpoſition, aſſiſted by favourable circumſtances, would be ſufficient to make his fortune. But it may be ſaid, that nothing is more common than ſuch characters, therefore, there is nobody who may not make his fortune, and obtain the good will of the great man by becoming the miniſter of his pleaſures, or his ſpy. Chance muſt then have a great ſhare in the fortunes of men. It is chance which makes us fathers, huſbands, and the friend of the beauty that is offered, and who pleaſes the patron; it is chance which places us near a great man at the moment when he wants a ſpy. "Whoever is without honour and without humour, ſaid the duke "of Orleans, the late regent, is a perfect courtier." According to this definition, it muſt be allowed, that the perfect man, in this kind, is only rare in regard to humour.

But, if great fortunes are, in general, the work of chance, and if man no otherwiſe contributes to obtain them, than by ſtooping to the mean and baſe actions neceſſary to procure them, it muſt, however, be confeſſed, that wit has ſometimes a ſhare in our elevation. The firſt, for example, who, by importunity, has made a patron; he who improving the haughty temper of the place-man, has drawn upon himſelf thoſe rough ſpeeches which diſhonours him who pronounces them, and forces him to become the protector of the perſon he has offended; he, I ſay, has introduced invention and wit into his conduct. It is the ſame with the firſt, who has perceived that, in order to riſe in the houſe of the man in power, he muſt condeſcend to be the butt of ridicule, and ſell, at as high a price as he can, his being deſpiſed and made a buffoon.

He who thus makes uſe of the vanity of another, to obtain his ends, is endowed with the ſpirit of conduct. The man of addreſs, in this kind, proceeds conſtantly towards his intereſt; but always under the ſhelter of another's intereſt. He is an able man, if, in order to arrive at the end he propoſes, he takes a road which ſeems to lead from it. This is the means of lulling to ſleep the jealouſy of his rivals, who do not awake till they can be no obſtacle to his projects. How many men of wit have played the fool, rendered themſelves ridiculous, and have affected the greateſt ſtupidity before their ſuperiors, who are too eaſily deceived by the baſe perſons who can ſtoop to this meanneſs? How many men have, conſequently, arrived at the higheſt fortune, and muſt have done ſo? In fact, all thoſe who are not animated with an extreme love for glory, cannot, in point of merit, even love any but their inferiors. This taſte derives its ſource from a vanity common to all men. Every one would be praiſed; now of all praiſes the moſt flattering is, without diſpute, that which moſt evidently proves our own excellence. What gratitude do we owe to thoſe who diſcover to us defects, that, without

without being prejudicial to us, assure us of our superiority? Of all flattery this is the most artful. At the court of Alexander it was dangerous to appear too great. "My son, make thyself little before Alexander, said Parmenio to Philotas: give him sometimes the pleasure of reproving thee: and remember, that, to thy apparent inferiority thou wilt owe his friendship." How many Alexanders are there in the world, who have a secret hatred to superior talents (a)? The man of mean abilities is beloved. "Sir, said a father to his son, you would succeed in the world, and yet believe that you have great merit. To humble your pride, know to what qualities you must owe your success: you are born without vices, without virtues, without character; your knowlege is little, your mind is limited; what a right, O my son, have you to the good will of mankind!"

But whatever advantage mean abilities procure, and whatever access it opens to fortune, wit, as I have said above, has sometimes a share in our elevation: why then has the public no esteem for this kind of wit? It is, I reply, because they are always ignorant of the arts made use of by the person of intrigue, and scarcely even know whether he owes his elevation to his wit, or to mere chance. Besides, the number of ideas, necessary for a person to make his fortune, is not immense. But what knowlege, say they, is necessary to improve upon mankind? The man of intrigue, I reply, knows perfectly the person he wants to make use of, though he is not acquainted with the rest of the world. Between the man of intrigue and the philosopher, we, in this respect, find the same difference as between the courier and the geographer. The first knows, perhaps, better than M. Danville the shortest way to Versailles; but he does not know the surface of the globe like that geographer. Let an artful man of intrigue be obliged to speak in public, and in an assembly of the people, he will be there as silly, as misplaced, and as silent, as a superior genius, when before a great man; he is ambitious of knowing mankind in all ages and all countries, and despises the art of knowing a particular man. The man of intrigue has not then a knowlege of mankind, which would be of no use to him. His view is not to please the public, but some men in power, who have often mean intellects, and too much wit would be prejudicial to his design. To please the people of ordinary understandings, we ought, in general, to give into common errors, to conform to established customs, and to resemble the rest of the world. A person of an elevated genius cannot stoop so low. He chuses rather to be the bank which opposes a torrent, though he should be overwhelmed by it, than a light bough floating about on the surface of the water. Besides, the man of great abilities, with whatever address he masks

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(a) A courtier belonging to Emanuel, king of Portugal, being ordered to write a dispatch, the prince composed one upon the same subject, and having compared them, found that of the courtier the best, this he told him. The courtier only replied by a profound bow, and went to take leave of his best friends: there is nothing more for me to do at court, said he, the king knows I have more wit than he.

himself,

himſelf, can never ſo exactly reſemble one that is ignorant, as an ignorant man reſembles himſelf. They are more ſure of a perſon when he takes, than when he pretends to take errors for truth.

The number of ideas, ſuppoſed by the art of conducting ourſelves, is not then very extenſive: but ſhould it require more, the public would have no eſteem for this kind of genius. The man of intrigue makes himſelf the center of nature; to his own intereſt alone he refers every thing; he does nothing to promote the public welfare: if he obtains high employments, he then enjoys the reſpect always annexed to power, and eſpecially to the fear he inſpires; but he cannot attain the reputation that ought to be conſidered as flowing from the gratitude of the people. I even add, that the abilities, by which he arrived at his high poſt, ſeem ſuddenly to abandon him. He is raiſed to great employments only to diſhonour them; becauſe the ſpirit of intrigue neceſſary to obtain them, has no relation to that ſtrength and depth of genius neceſſary to diſcharge them worthily. Beſides, the ſpirit of intrigue is united to a certain meanneſs that muſt ſtill render him deſpicable in the eyes of the public.

Not but that people may unite in great intrigues with an extraordinary elevation of mind. If, after the example of Cromwell, a man is deſirous of mounting a throne; the power and luſtre of a crown, and the pleaſures annexed to government, may doubtleſs, in his eyes, ennoble the baſeneſs of his plots, ſince they efface the horror of his crime in the opinion of poſterity, who places ſuch a one in the rank of the greateſt men: but if, by an infinite number of intrigues, a man endeavours to raiſe himſelf to thoſe little poſts which he can never deſerve; if he is mentioned in hiſtory by the name of villain, or cheat, he is rendered deſpicable, not only in the eyes of honeſt men, but alſo in thoſe of perſons of underſtanding. He ought to be a little man who deſires little things. Whoever finds himſelf above want, without being by his rank entitled to the firſt poſts, can have no other motive than that of glory, and has no other part to chuſe, if he is a man of abilities, than to ſhew himſelf ſteadily virtuous.

The man of intrigue ought then to renounce the public eſteem. But it may be ſaid, that he is fully recompenſed for the loſs of it, by the happineſs annexed to a great fortune. People deceive themſelves, I reply, if they think him happy; for happineſs is not an appendage of great places; it depends only on the agreement between our diſpoſitions and the circumſtances in which fortune has placed us. It is with men as with nations, the moſt happy are not always thoſe that make the greateſt figure in the world. What nation more fortunate than the Swiſs! Among theſe wiſe people the happy do not throw every thing into diſorder by their intrigues; contented at home, they employ themſelves but little about others; they are not found in the road of ambition; a part of their time is taken up in ſtudy; they are but little known, and the obſcurity of their happineſs renders it ſecure.

It is not thus with the man of intrigue; the miniſters ſell him dear the titles with which they adorn him. What does the patron require from him? The perpetual ſacrifice of the will is the only homage that can pleaſe him. Like Saturn, Moloch, and Tuiſco, if he dared, he would be honoured by none

none but human ſacrifices. The pain endured by thoſe he protects, is an agreeable ſight to the protector; this informs him of his power, and makes him conceive an higher opinion of himſelf. Thus it is only to the moſt painful attitudes that moſt nations have attached the ſign of reſpect.

Whoever would, by his intrigues, riſe to the poſſeſſion of great employments, muſt devote himſelf to humiliations. Ever reſtleſs, he can at firſt only perceive happineſs in the perſpective of an uncertain futurity; and it is from hope, that reviving dream of men awake and unhappy, that he muſt expect his felicity. When he has obtained it by ſuffering a thouſand mortifications, he commonly revenges what he has felt, by his ſeverity and cruelty towards the unhappy, refuſes them his aſſiſtance, renders their miſery a crime, reproaches them for it, and believes that, by this reproach, he makes his inhumanity conſidered as an act of juſtice, and his fortune as derived from merit: he does not, however, enjoy the pleaſure of convincing any one that this is the truth.

How can we be aſſured that the fortune of a man is the effect of this conduct, eſpecially in thoſe countries that are intirely deſpotic, where of the vileſt ſlave they make a viſier; where riches depend on the will of the prince, and on a momentary caprice, the cauſe of which is not always perceived? The motives, which in this caſe determine the ſultans, are almoſt conſtantly concealed; hiſtorians relate only the apparent motives, they are ignorant of the true ones; and, in this reſpect, we may, after M. de Fontenelle, aſſert, that hiſtory is only a fable which people conſider as true.

In a compariſon between Cæſar and Pompey, if, as Balzac ſays, ſpeaking of their fortune,

> One is the workman, and the other the work,

it muſt be acknowleged, there are but few Cæſars, and that, in arbitrary governments, chance is almoſt the only god of fortune. Every thing there depends on a moment, and on the circumſtances in which a perſon is placed; and this, perhaps, as in the eaſt, has given the greateſt credit to the doctrine of fatality. According to the Muſulmans, deſtiny keeps every thing under her empire, places kings on the throne, drives them from thence, fills their reign with happy or unhappy events, conſtitutes the felicity or unhappineſs of all mortals. According to them, wiſdom and folly, or the virtues and vices of a man, make no change in the decrees engraven on the tables of light (b). To prove this doctrine, and, conſequently, to ſhew that the moſt criminal is not always the moſt unhappy, and that one proceeds to puniſhment by the ſame road which leads another to fortune, the Indian Mahometans relate a remarkable fable.

(b) The Muſulmans believe that every thing, which is to happen till the end of the world, is written on a table of light called LOUH, with a pen of fire called CALAM-AZER, and the writing above is named CAZA, or CADAR, that is, THE INEVITABLE PREDESTINATION.

Want,

Want, ſay they, formerly aſſembled a number of men in the deſarts of Tartary. Deprived of all, ſaid one, we have a right to all. The law, which ſtrips us of neceſſaries to augment the ſuperfluities of ſome rajahs, is unjuſt. Let us ſtruggle with injuſtice. A treaty can no longer ſubſiſt, where the advantages ceaſe to be mutual. We muſt force from our oppreſſors the wealth they have forced from us. At theſe words the orator was ſilent; a murmur of approbation ran through the whole aſſembly, they applauded the ſpeech; the project was noble, and they reſolved to execute it. They divided about the means. The braveſt roſe firſt: Force, ſaid they, has deprived us of all; it is by force we muſt recover all. If our rajahs have by their tyrannic injuſtice ſnatched from us even what is neceſſary, ſo far as to require us to laviſh upon them our ſubſtance, our labour, and our lives, why ſhould we refuſe to our wants what the tyrants permit to their injuſtice? At the confines of theſe regions, the baſhaws, by the preſents they require, divide the profits of the caravans; they plunder the men enſlaved by their power and by fear. Leſs unjuſt and more brave than they, let us attack men in arms; let valour decide the victory, and let our riches be at leaſt, the price of our courage. We have a right to them. Heaven, by the gift of bravery, points out thoſe who ſhould ſhake off the fetters of tyranny. Let the huſbandman without ſtrength or courage, plow, ſow, and reap: it is for us that he has gathered in the harveſt.

Let us ravage, let us pillage the nations. We conſent to all, cried thoſe who having more wit and leſs courage, feared to expoſe themſelves to danger; yet let us owe nothing to force, but all to impoſture. We ſhall receive without danger from the hands of credulity, what we ſhall in vain, perhaps, attempt to ſnatch by force. Let us clothe ourſelves with the name and the habit of the bonzes, or the bramins, and encompaſs the earth; we ſhall ſee every one eager to ſupply our wants, and even our ſecret pleaſures.

This party appeared baſe and cowardly to thoſe who were fierce and courageous. Being divided in opinion, the aſſembly ſeparated; one party ſpread itſelf into India, Tibet, and the confines of China. Their countenances were auſtere, and their bodies macerated. They impoſed on the people, they taught, they perſuaded, they divided families, cauſed the children to be diſinherited, and applied their ſubſtance to themſelves. The people gave them lands, built them temples, and ſettled upon them great revenues. They borrowed the arm of power, in order to make the man of underſtanding bow to the yoke of ſuperſtition. In ſhort, they ſubdued all minds by keeping the ſceptre carefully concealed under the rags of miſery and the aſhes of penance.

During this time, their old brave companions retired into the deſarts, ſurpriſed the caravans, attacked them ſword in hand, and divided among themſelves the booty.

One day, when, doubtleſs, the battle had not turned to their advantage, the people ſeized one of theſe robbers, they conducted him to the next city, they prepared the ſcaffold, they led him to execution. He walked with a firm ſtep, till he found in his way and knew again, under the habit of a bramin, one of thoſe who had ſeparated from him in the deſart. The people

reſpectfully

reſpectfully ſurrounded the bramin, and conducted him to his pagod. The robber ſtopped at ſeeing him: Juſt Gods! cried he, though equal in crimes, what a difference is there in our deſtiny! What do I ſay? Equal in crimes! In one day he has, without fear, without danger, without courage, made more widows and orphans ſigh, and deprived the empire of more riches, than I have pillaged in the whole courſe of my life. He had always two vices more than I, cowardice and falſehood; yet I am treated as a villain, he honoured as a ſaint; they drag me to the ſcaffold, him they lead to his pagod; me they impale, him they adore.

Thus do the Indians prove, that there is neither happineſs nor unhappineſs in this world.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the excluſive Qualities of the Mind and Soul.

MY view in the preceding chapters was to affix clear ideas to the ſeveral qualities of the mind; I propoſe in this to examine, if there are talents that muſt neceſſarily exclude each other. This queſtion, it is ſaid, is determined by facts: no perſon is at the ſame time ſuperior to all others in many different kinds of knowlege. Newton is not reckoned among the poets, nor Milton among the geometricians: the verſes of Leibnitz are bad. There is not a man who in a ſingle art, as poetry, or painting, has ſucceeded in all the branches of it. Corneille and Racine have done nothing in comedy comparable to Moliere: Michael Angelo has not drawn the pictures of Albani, nor Albani painted thoſe of Julius Romano. The genius of the greateſt men appears then to be confined within very narrow limits. This is, doubtleſs, true: but I aſk, what is the cauſe? Is it time, or is it wit, which men want to render themſelves illuſtrious in the different arts and ſciences?

The progreſs of the human mind, it is ſaid, ought to be the ſame in all the arts and ſciences: the operations of the mind are reduced to the knowlege of the reſemblances and differences that ſubſiſt between various objects. It is then by obſervation that we obtain, in all the different kinds of ſtudy, the new and general ideas on which our ſuperiority depends. Every great phyſician, every great chemiſt, may then become a great geometrician, a great aſtronomer, a great politician, and the firſt, in ſhort, in all the ſciences. This fact being ſtated, it will, doubtleſs, be concluded, that it

is the ſhort duration of human life that forces ſuperior minds to limit themſelves to one kind of ſtudy.

It muſt, however, be confeſſed, that there are talents and qualities poſſeſſed only by the excluſion of ſome others. Among mankind ſome are filled with the love of glory, and are not ſuſceptible of any other of the paſſions: ſome may excel in natural philoſophy, civil law, geometry, and, in ſhort, in all the ſciences that conſiſt in the compariſon of ideas. A fondneſs for any other ſtudy can only diſtract or precipitate them into errors. There are other men ſuſceptible not only of the love of glory, but an infinite number of other paſſions: theſe may become celebrated in ſeveral different kinds of ſtudy, where the ſucceſs depends on being moved.

Such is, for inſtance, the dramatic kind of writing: but, in order to paint the paſſions, we muſt, as I have already ſaid, feel them very warmly: we are ignorant both of the language of the paſſions and of the ſenſations they excite in us, when we have not experienced them. Thus ignorance of this kind always produces mediocrity. If Fontenelle had been obliged to paint the characters of Rhadamiſtus, Brutus, or Catiline, that great man would certainly have fallen much below mediocrity.

Theſe principles being eſtabliſhed, I conclude that the love of glory is common to all who diſtinguiſh themſelves in any kind of ſtudy whatſoever; ſince that alone, as I have proved, is ſufficient to make us ſupport the fatigue of thought. But this paſſion, according to the circumſtances in which fortune has placed us, may be united to other paſſions. The men in whom this union ſubſiſts, can never have any great ſucceſs, if they give themſelves up intirely to the ſtudy of one ſcience, as, for inſtance, morality, where, in order to ſee well, we muſt ſee with an attentive, but indifferent eye: in this ſcience it is indifference which holds the balance of juſtice. In diſputes, it is not the parties, but an indifferent perſon who is taken for judge. What man, for inſtance, that is capable of loving violently, would, like M. de Fontenelle, approve the crime of infidelity? "In an age, ſays that philoſopher, when I was moſt amorous, my "miſtreſs left me for another lover. I heard of it, and was enraged: I went "to her, and loaded her with approaches: ſhe heard me, and laughing, ſaid, "Fontenelle, when I took you, it was doubtleſs pleaſure that I ſought: I found "more with another. Is it to the leaſt degree of pleaſure that I ought to give "the preference? Be juſt, and anſwer me. On my faith, ſaid Fontenelle, you "are in the right; and though I am no longer your lover, I will ſtill be your "friend." Such an anſwer ſuppoſes but little love in Fontenelle: the paſſions do not reaſon ſo juſtly.

We may then diſtinguiſh two different kinds of the arts and ſciences, the firſt of which ſuppoſes a mind free from every other paſſion but that of glory; and the ſecond, on the contrary, ſuppoſes a mind ſuſceptible of a variety of paſſions. There are then excluſive talents; and the ignorance of this truth is the ſource of much injuſtice. We deſire that men ſhall have contradictory qualities; we demand impoſſibilities from them: and would have the ſtone that is thrown, remain ſuſpended in the air, without obeying the laws of gravitation.

Let

Let a man, for inſtance, like M. de Fontenelle, contemplate, without ſeverity, the wickedneſs of mankind; let him conſider it, let him riſe up againſt crimes without hating the criminals, and people will applaud his moderation; and yet, at the ſame inſtant, they will accuſe him of being too lukewarm in friendſhip. They do not perceive, that the ſame abſence of the paſſions, to which he owes the moderation they commend, muſt neceſſarily render him leſs ſenſible of the charms of friendſhip.

Nothing is more common than to require contradictory qualities from men. This is occaſioned by our blind love of happineſs: we would be conſtantly happy, and thence would have the ſame objects aſſume every inſtant the form we think moſt agreeable. We have ſeen various perfections ſcattered among different objects; hence, we would find them united in one, and taſte a thouſand pleaſures at once. For this purpoſe, we would have the ſame fruit have the luſtre of the diamond, the odour of the roſe, the taſte of the peach, and the coolneſs of the pomegranate. It is then the blind love of happineſs, the ſource of an infinite number of ridiculous wiſhes, that makes men deſire qualities that are abſolutely impoſſible to be blended together. To deſtroy this fruitful ſeed of unjuſt expectation, it is neceſſary to treat this ſubject in a pretty extenſive manner. It is only by pointing out, in conformity to the end I propoſe, both the qualities abſolutely excluſive, and thoſe that are too ſeldom found united in the ſame perſon for us to have a right to deſire them, that a man can be at once rendered more enlightened, and more indulgent.

A father would have his ſon unite to great talents a moſt wiſe conduct. But do you know, I ask, that you deſire to have in your ſon qualities that are almoſt incompatible? Know, that if ſome ſingular concourſe of circumſtances have ſometimes united them in the ſame man, yet they are very ſeldom blended together; that great abilities always ſuppoſe ſtrong paſſions; that ſtrong paſſions produce a thouſand irregularities; and that, on the contrary, what is called good conduct, is almoſt always the effect of the abſence of the paſſions, and conſequently the appendage of moderate abilities. It requires ſtrong paſſions to form the great, of what kind ſoever. Why do we ſee ſo many countries barren of great men? Why ſo many little Cato's, ſo wonderful in early youth, who have commonly in advanced age only common abilities? From what reaſon, in ſhort, is the world ſo full of ingenious children, and ſtupid men? It is becauſe in moſt governments the citizens are not inflamed by ſtrong paſſions. Well, I conſent, the father will ſay, that my ſon ſhall be animated by them, it will be ſufficient for me to direct them towards certain objects of ſtudy. But do you perceive, I reply, the hazard of the deſire? It is expecting that a man with good eyes, ſhould perceive only the objects you point out to him. Before you form any plan of education, you ought to be fully determined within yourſelf, and know what you deſire moſt for your ſon, whether great abilities, or a wiſe conduct. Is it to a good conduct that you give the preference? Believe that ſtrong paſſions would be a fatal gift to your ſon, and eſpecially among a people, where, by the conſtitution of the government, the paſſions are not always directed towards virtue; ſtifle therefore within him, if poſſible, all the ſeeds of paſſions. But I ſhall then, the father will reply,

give up the hope of rendering him a man of merit. Doubtleſs you will. If you cannot reſolve upon this, reſtore him the paſſions and endeavour to direct them to laudable purſuits: but expect to ſee him perform great things, and ſometimes commit the greateſt faults. There is no medium in a man of ſtrong paſſions; and it is chance which generally determines his firſt ſteps. If the men of ſtrong paſſions become illuſtrious in the arts, if the ſciences preſerve ſome empire over them, and if they ſometimes obſerve a wiſe conduct; it is not ſo with the men of ſtrong paſſions, whoſe birth, character, dignities, and riches call them to the firſt poſts in the world. The good or bad conduct of theſe is almoſt intirely ſubject to the empire of chance; according to the circumſtances in which they are placed, and the moment of their birth, their qualities change into vices and virtues. Chance makes at its pleaſure an Appius or a Decius. In M. de Voltaire's tragedy, Cæſar ſays, "If I was not the maſter "of the Romans, I ſhould be their avenger.

"Had I not been Cæſar, I ſhould have been Brutus."

Give to the ſon of a cooper, wit, courage, prudence, and activity: Among republicans where military merit opens a door to grandeur, you will make a Themiſtocles or a Marius (a): at Paris you will only form a Cartouche.

Let a man bold, enterprizing, and capable of executing the moſt deſperate reſolutions, appear when the ſtate, ravaged by powerful enemies, ſeems without reſource; if ſucceſs favours his enterprizes, he is a demi-god: at any other time, he is no more than a madman or a fool.

To theſe different ends are we frequently conducted by the ſame paſſions. This is the danger to which the father expoſes himſelf, whoſe children are ſuſceptible of theſe ſtrong paſſions, which ſo often change the face of the world. It is, in this caſe, the conformity of their minds and diſpoſitions, with the ſtation in which they are placed, that make them what they are. Every thing depends on this conformity. Among thoſe ordinary men, who by important ſervices cannot render themſelves of uſe to the world, crown themſelves with glory, nor pretend to the general eſteem, there are none who would not be of advantage to their fellow citizens, and aquire a right to their gratitude, were they but placed in the poſts moſt ſuitable to them: it is on this ſubject that Fontaine ſays,

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(a) Lu-cong-pang founder of the dynaſty of Han, was the firſt of a gang of robbers; he made himſelf maſter of a town; attached himſelf to the ſervice of T-cou; became the general of armies, defeated T-ſin, rendered himſelf maſter of ſeveral cities; took the title of king; and fought and diſarmed the princes, who revolted againſt the empire: by his clemency more than by his valour he reſtored the peace of China, was acknowledged emperor, and is mentioned in the Chineſe hiſtory as one of their moſt illuſtrious princes.

Un roi prudent & ſage
De ſes moindres ſujets ſait tirer quelque uſage.

That is,

A wiſe and prudent king
Will turn to his own advantage the abilities of his meaneſt ſubjects.

Let us ſuppoſe, for inſtance, that a place of conſequence is vacant. A perſon muſt be nominated to fill it; and it requires one that can be depended upon. He who is propoſed, has but little wit, beſides, he is indolent. This, I ſay, ſignifies nothing to him who nominates him: give him the place. A good conſcience is often indolent; activity, when it is not the effect of the love of glory, is ſuſpicious; the knave, always agitated by remorſe and fear, is inceſſantly in action. "Vigilance, ſays Rouſſeau, is the virtue of vice."

A place is ready to be diſpoſed of: it requires aſſiduity. He who is propoſed is a ſloven, diſagreeable, and burthenſome to good company: ſo much the better, aſſiduity will render his being a ſloven a virtue.

I ſhall not expatiate any farther on this ſubject; but conclude with what I have ſaid above, that a father, by requiring the greateſt talents from his ſon, joined to the wiſeſt conduct, deſires that he ſhould have the principle of irregularity, and yet that he ſhould never ſwerve from a regular conduct.

Not leſs unjuſt with reſpect to deſpotic princes, than the father with reſpect to his ſon; throughout all the eaſt, there are people who require from their ſultans many virtues, and more particularly great knowlege: yet what can be more unjuſt? Are you ignorant, might one ſay to theſe people, that knowlege is the reward of much ſtudy and reflection? Study and reflection are painful: the people then muſt make uſe of all their endeavours to preſerve the prince from them; he muſt then give way to his lazineſs, if he is not animated by a motive ſo powerful as to make him triumph over it. What can this motive be? Nothing but the deſire of glory. But this deſire, as I have proved in the third diſcourſe, is itſelf founded on the deſire of the pleaſure procured by glory, and the general eſteem. Now, if the ſultan, in quality of a deſpotic prince, enjoys all the pleaſures which glory can promiſe to other men, the ſultan is then without deſires, and nothing can kindle in him the love of glory: he has not a motive ſufficient to enable him to undergo the tireſome task of buſineſs, and to expoſe himſelf to that fatigue of attention, neceſſary to his obtaining inſtruction. To require knowlege from him, is to deſire, that the rivers ſhould run back to their ſource; and to expect an effect without a cauſe.

All hiſtory juſtifies this truth. Let us open that of China: we there ſee revolutions rapidly ſucceed each other. The great man who raiſes himſelf to the empire, has for his ſucceſſors princes born in purple, who not having the ſame powerful motives as their father to render themſelves illuſtrious, ſleep on the throne; and moſt of them loſe it by the third generation, frequently without having any other crime to reproach themſelves with, but that of indolence.

I ſhall

I ſhall mention only one example of this (b). Li-t-ching, a man of an obſcure birth, took up arms againſt the emperor T-cong-ching, placed himſelf at the head of the malecontents, raiſed an army, marched to Pekin, and ſurprized that city. The empreſs and the queens ſtrangled themſelves; the emperor ſtabbed his daughter, and retired into a diſtant part of his palace, where, before he put an end to his life, he wrote theſe words on the lappet of his robe: "I have reigned ſeventeen years: I am dethroned, and in this misfortune ſee nothing but the puniſhment of heaven, juſtly offended at my indolence. I am not, however, the only one guilty: the great men of my court are ſtill more ſo than I; it is they, who, by concealing from me the knowlege of the affairs of the empire, have dug the pit into which I am fallen. With what face ſhall I appear before my anceſtors? How ſupport their reproaches? O ye, who have reduced me to this dreadful ſituation! take my body, cut it in pieces, I conſent to it; but ſpare my poor people: they are innocent, and already unhappy enough, in having had me ſo long for their maſter."

A thouſand of the like inſtances found in hiſtory, prove, that luxury and ſoftneſs influence almoſt all thoſe, who, by their birth are armed with arbitrary power. The atmoſphere ſpread over theſe thrones, and the deſpotic ſovereigns who ſit upon them, ſeem to be filled with a lethargic vapour, which ſeizes all the faculties of their ſouls. Thence they are ſeldom reckoned among great kings, except when they have cleared the way to the throne, or been long inſtructed in the ſchool of misfortune. They always owe their knowlege to the intereſt they have in acquiring it.

Why are little princes generally more able men than the moſt powerful deſpotic ſovereigns? It is becauſe they have, in a manner, their fortunes to make; becauſe they are obliged, with an inferior force, to reſiſt that which is ſuperior; becauſe they live in the perpetual fear of having their dominions taken from them; and becauſe their intereſt, being more ſtrictly united with that of their ſubjects, muſt enlighten them with reſpect to the various parts of the legiſlation. Thus they are in general much more buſily employed in training up ſoldiers, contracting alliances, and in peopling and enriching their provinces. Thus we might, in conſequence of what I have ſaid, prepare geographi-political maps of the merit of the princes in the ſeveral empires of the eaſt. Their underſtanding, meaſured by the ſcale of their power, would decreaſe in proportion to the extent and the ſtrength of their empires, to the difficulty of penetrating into them, and in ſhort, to the more or leſs abſolute authority they have over their ſubjects; that is, to the more or leſs preſſing intereſt they have in being enlightened. This ſcale being once calculated and compared with obſervation, it would certainly afford very juſt concluſions: the Sophies and Moguls would, for example, be placed in the rank of the moſt ſtupid princes; becauſe, excepting ſome ſingular circumſtances where they have accidentally had a good education, the moſt powerful muſt commonly be the moſt ignorant.

(b) See the hiſtory of the Huns, by M. de Guignes, tom. I. p. 74.

To

To require an eaſtern deſpotic prince to conſult the happineſs of his people, and with a ſtrong arm and a ſteady hand to hold the helm of government, would be to deſire that the arm of Ganymede ſhould wield the club of Hercules. Let us ſuppoſe that an Indian was, in this reſpect, to make ſome remonſtrances to the Mogul: of what doſt thou complain? might he reply. Can'ſt thou without injuſtice require, that I ſhould be more enlightened than thyſelf with reſpect to thy own intereſt? When thou didſt inveſt me with ſupreme power, couldſt thou believe that, forgetting pleaſure for the painful honour of rendering thee happy, I and my ſucceſſors would not enjoy the advantages attached to arbitrary power? Every man loves himſelf preferably to all others; thou knoweſt this. To require then, that, deaf to the voice of care and the cry of my paſſions, I ſhould ſacrifice them to thy intereſt, is to endeavour to ſubvert the order of nature. How can'ſt thou imagine, that being able to do every thing, I would never do any thing unjuſt? The man fond of the public eſteem thou ſay'ſt, makes a different uſe of his power. I confeſs it; but of what importance is glory, and the eſteem of the public to me? Is there one pleaſure granted to virtue, that is refuſed to power? Beſides, the men paſſionately fond of glory are ſcarce, and this is not a paſſion that deſcends to their ſucceſſors. This ought to have been foreſeen, and thou ſhouldſt have been ſenſible, that by arming me with an arbitrary authority, thou haſt cut the knot of mutual dependance, which binds the ſovereign to the ſubject, and that thou haſt ſeparated my intereſt from thine. Imprudent, in placing in my hand the ſceptre of deſpotiſm; cowardly, in not daring to ſnatch it from me; be at once puniſhed for thine imprudence and thy cowardice: know, that if thou breatheſt, it is becauſe I permit thee: learn, that every inſtant of thy life is a favour. Vile ſlave, thou wert born, thou liveſt for my pleaſures. Bend under the weight of thy chain, cringe at my feet, languiſh in miſery, die; I forbid thee to complain: ſuch is my will.

What I have ſaid of ſultans, may in part be applied to their miniſters: their knowlege is, in general, in proportion to the intereſt they have in acquiring it. In the countries where the cries of the public may depoſe them, great abilities are neceſſary, and they are obliged to acquire them. On the contrary, among the public, where the people has neither credit nor the leaſt influence, they deliver themſelves up to idleneſs, and are contented with that kind of merit neceſſary to make their fortunes at court; a merit abſolutely incompatible with great abilities, from the oppoſition found between the intereſt of the courtiers and the general intereſt. It is in this reſpect with miniſters as with men of learning: It is a ridiculous pretence to aim at the ſame time at glory and paſſions: before they compoſe their works, they ought always to chuſe, whether they would have the eſteem of the public, or that of the courtiers. It muſt be known, that in moſt courts, and eſpecially in thoſe of the eaſt, the men are from their infancy, ſwathed and confined in their ſwadling cloaths of prejudice and arbitrary conſtraint; that moſt minds are bound up ſo, that they cannot riſe to be great; that no man who is born and lives near deſpotic thrones, can eſcape the general contagion, and he is under a neceſſity of never having any but mean ideas.

Thus,

Thus, true merit reſides far from the palaces of kings. It never approaches but in times of misfortune, when the princes are forced to invite it. At any other time, want alone may draw men of merit to the court; but in this ſituation there are few who preſerve the ſame ſtrength and elevation of mind. Want is too nearly allied to guilt.

It follows from what I have been ſaying, that it is demanding an impoſſibility to require great talents of thoſe, who, by their ſtate and ſituation, cannot be animated by ſtrong paſſions. But how many of theſe demands are made every day? People complain of the corruption of manners; we ought, ſay they, to form virtuous men, and they would have the citizens warmed with the love of their country, and yet ſee in ſilence the misfortunes occaſioned by a bad legiſlation. They do not perceive, that this is requiring a miſer not to exclaim againſt a robber, when he is carrying off his ſtrong box. They do not obſerve, that thoſe, who, in certain countries are called wiſe men, are always indifferent with reſpect to the public welfare, and are conſequently without virtue. It is with equal injuſtice, as I am going to prove in the following chapter, that people demand of men, not only talents, but qualities and habits contrary to each other, and which cannot ſubſiſt together.

CHAP. XV.

Of the Injuſtice of the Public in this reſpect.

PEOPLE require that an equerry, accuſtomed to point his toes to his horſes ears, ſhould have them as well turned as a dancer at the opera-houſe; they would have a philoſopher, ſolely employed in ſtrong and general ideas, write like a woman of diſtinction, or even be ſuperior, for inſtance, in the epiſtolary ſtyle, where, in order to write well, it is neceſſary to write agreeably without a ſubject. They do not perceive that this is demanding the union of talents that are almoſt incompatible; and, that there is no woman of wit who is not, in this reſpect, ſuperior to the moſt celebrated philoſopher.

It is, with the ſame injuſtice that people expect the man who has never read or ſtudied, and has ſpent thirty years of his life in diſſipation of thought, ſhould ſuddenly become capable of ſtudy and meditation: they ought, however, to know, that it is the habit of meditation to which we owe the capacity for meditating, and that this capacity is loſt when we ceaſe to make uſe of it. In fact, when a man, though habituated to labour and application, finds himſelf ſuddenly truſted with too great a part of the adminiſtration, a thouſand different objects will paſs rapidly before him: he can only caſt a ſuperficial glance

glance on each affair, and for this very reaſon, after a certain time, he will become incapable of a long and cloſe attention. We have not, therefore, a right to require an equal attention from a miniſter. It is not for him to pierce to the firſt principles of morality and politics; to diſcover, for inſtance, how far luxury is uſeful in a ſtate, what changes it may introduce in the manners of a people, and in the conſtitution; what kind of commerce ought to be encouraged; by what laws we may in the ſame nation reconcile the ſpirit of commerce with that of war, and render it at the ſame time rich at home, and formidable abroad. The ſolution of ſuch problems requires leiſure, and a habit of reflection: now, how can a perſon think much when he has much to execute? We ought not then to require from a man in an high poſt, that invention that ſuppoſes cloſe application. What we have a right to demand from him, is a juſt, lively, and penetrating wit, and which, in matters of debate in relation to politics and philoſophy, is capable of ſtriking out the truth, and ſeizing it with ſtrength; and of being ſo fertile in expedients as to carry into execution the projects he adopts: for this laſt reaſon he ought to add to this wit a firmneſs and conſtancy not to be ſhaken.

The people are not always ſufficiently grateful for the advantages they receive from miniſters: being ungrateful through ignorance, they do not know what courage is neceſſary to do good, and to triumph over the obſtacles which perſonal intereſt places againſt the general happineſs (a). Thus, courage enlightened by probity, is the principal merit of men in high poſts. In vain do the people flatter themſelves with the hopes of finding in them a fund of knowlege; they cannot be deeply verſed in any affairs that have not been the ſubject of their contemplations, before they obtained great employments: now theſe affairs are neceſſarily but few in number. To be convinced of this, let us follow the life of thoſe who are deſigned for high poſts. At ſixteen or ſeventeen years of of age they leave the college, learn to ride the great horſe, and to perform their exerciſes; then ſpend two or three years in the academies, and the ſchools of law; the ſtudy of the law being ended, they purchaſe a place. In order to

(a) At the moment when a perſon is nominated to be a miniſter, one of the firſt commiſſioners of Verſailles, who is commonly a man of much wit, addreſſes him to this purpoſe: "You love what is good, "and you are now enabled to do it. A "thouſand projects, of uſe to the public, "will be preſented to you, and you will "deſire that they may ſucceed: take care "however of undertaking any thing before "you have examined it, whether the exe- "cution of theſe projects will require only "ſmall ſums, little care, and but little "probity. If the money required for the "ſucceſs of one of theſe projects be conſi- "derable, the affairs under your manage- "ment will not permit you to apply to it "the neceſſary funds, and to loſe your "diſburſements. If the ſucceſs depends "on the vigilance and probity of thoſe you "employ, fear leſt they force you to be un- "der a difficulty in the choice of proper "perſons: fear alſo that you are going to "be ſurrounded by knaves; it requires a "very penetrating eye, to diſcover them; "and the firſt, but at the ſame time the "moſt difficult knowlege of a miniſter, "is that of knowing how to make a proper "choice."

diſcharge the duty of it, it is not neceſſary to inſtruct themſelves in the law of nature and nations, and the public law, but to conſecrate all their time to the examination of ſome particular cauſes. They paſs from thence to the government of a province, where, over-burthened by daily details, and fatigued by giving audiences, they have no time for reflection. They at length riſe to ſuperior places, and find, that after thirty years exerciſe, they have only the ſame kind of ideas as they had at twenty, or twenty-two years of age. Upon which I ſhall obſerve, that voyages made to the neighbouring nations, in which they might compare the differences to be found in the form of government, and in the legiſlation, genius, commerce, and manners of the people, would be, perhaps, more proper to form ſtateſmen than the education actually given them. I ſhall expatiate no farther on this ſubject; but ſhall conclude this chapter with conſidering the men of genius; becauſe it is chiefly in them that people deſire excluſive qualities and abilities.

Two cauſes, equally powerful, lead to this injuſtice; the one, as I have ſaid above, is the blind love of our own happineſs, and the other is envy.

Who has not condemned cardinal de Richlieu for that exceſſive love of glory that rendered him greedy of every ſpecies of ſucceſs? Who has not ridiculed the ardour with which, if we may believe Dumaurier (b), he deſired canonization; and the order given in conſequence of it to his confeſſors, to publiſh every where, that he had never committed a mortal ſin? In ſhort, who has not laughed at being informed, that at the ſame inſtant inflamed with a deſire of being thought to excel in poetry, as well as in politics, that cardinal cauſed Corneille to be asked to give up to him the honour of writing the CID? It was however to this love of glory, ſo often condemned, that he owed his great abilities for the adminiſtration. If we have not ſince ſeen a miniſter make pretenſions to ſo many kinds of glory, it is becauſe we have yet had only one cardinal de Richlieu.

The reſolution to centre in one ſingle deſire the action of the ſtrong paſſions, and to imagine, that a man enflamed with a love of glory, ſhould be contented with one ſingle ſpecies of ſucceſs, when he believed he has it in his power to obtain it in ſeveral, is to deſire that a piece of excellent land ſhould produce only one kind of fruit. Whoever has a ſtrong love of glory, is ſecretly conſcious that the ſucceſs of political projects ſometimes depend on chance, and often on the folly of thoſe with whom he treats: he would have it more perſonal. Now, without a ridiculous and ſtupid pride, he cannot diſdain the glory acquired by learning, to which ſo many great princes and heroes have aſpired. Moſt of them, not ſatisfied with immortalizing themſelves by their actions, have reſolved to do it by their writings, and at leaſt to leave to poſterity precepts on the art of war and in politics, in which they have excelled. How ſhould they avoid being ambitious of this honour? Theſe great men loved glory, and no one is ambitious of obtaining it without deſiring to communicate to mankind the ideas that ought to render us in their eyes ſtill more worthy of eſteem. How

(b) See *Mémoires pour ſervir à l'hiſtoire de la Hollande*, article *Grotius*.

many

many proofs of this truth are to be found in hiſtory? Xenophon, Alexander, Hannibal, Hanno, the Scipios, Cæſar, Cicero, Auguſtus, Trajan, the Antoninuſſes, Comnenes, Elizabeth, Charles V. Richlieu, Montecuculi, du Guay-Trouin, and the count de Saxe, by their writings reſolved to enlighten the world and ſhade their heads with different kinds of laurels.

If now it cannot be conceived, how men intruſted with the adminiſtration of the world, found time to think and write; it is, I reply becauſe buſineſs is ſoon concluded, when they do not deviate into particulars, and affairs are taken by their true principles. If all great men have not compoſed, all have at leaſt protected men of learning, and were under a neceſſity of doing it, becauſe, being in love with glory, they knew that the great authors beſtowed it. Thus, Charles V. founded an academy before Richlieu: thus, the fierce Attila himſelf aſſembled about him the learned of all kinds; the caliph Aaron Al-Raſchid had them at his court; and Tamerlane eſtabliſhed the academy of Samarcand. What a reception did Trajan give to merit? Under his reign people were allowed to think, to ſpeak, and to write every thing; becauſe the writers, ſtruck with the luſtre of his virtues and abilities, could not avoid being his panegyriſts: very different in this reſpect were Nero, Caligula, and Domitian, who, from a contrary reaſon, impoſed ſilence on the men of learning, leſt in their writings they ſhould tranſmit to poſterity the vices and diſgrace of thoſe tyrants.

I have ſhewn in the examples above-mentioned, that the ſame deſire of glory to which great men owe their ſuperiority, may, with reſpect to genius, make them aſpire to univerſal monarchy. It is doubtleſs poſſible to unite greater modeſty to abilities: for theſe qualities are not in their own nature excluſive, though they are ſo in ſome men. There are thoſe who cannot be deprived of this vain opinion of themſelves, without having the ſeeds of their genius loſt. This is a defect, and envy takes the advantage of it, in order to diſcredit merit; ſhe is pleaſed with pulling men in pieces, ſure of always finding, by this means, ſome diſfavourable ſide, under which ſhe may preſent them to the public. We cannot too often recollect, that it is with men as with works; that we ought to judge of them together; that there is nothing perfect on earth; and that if we were to deſcribe the virtues and defects of each man's mind and character, by ribbons of two oppoſite colours, there is not a man who would not be ſpeckled with thoſe two colours. Great men are like thoſe rich mines, where gold is always found more or leſs mixed with lead. It is neceſſary then, that the envious ſhould ſometimes ſay to himſelf: if it be poſſible to degrade this gold in the opinion of the public, what value ought they to ſet on me, who am a mine of mere lead? But the envious will be always deaf to ſuch advice. Dexterous at ſeizing the leaſt faults committed by the men of genius, how often have they accuſed them with not being ſo agreeable in their manners as the reſt of the world? They will not recollect, as I have ſaid above, that like thoſe animals that remain in the deſarts, moſt of the men of genius live in retirement, and that it is in the ſilence of ſolitude that truth unveils herſelf to their ſight.

Now all men who by their kind of life are thrown into a particular chain of circumſtances, and who contemplate objects under a new face, cannot have in

their minds either the good qualities, or defects, common to ordinary men. Why does a Frenchman reſemble another Frenchman, more than a German, and a German much more than a Chineſe? Becauſe theſe two nations by their education, and the reſemblance of the objects preſented to them, have an infinitely greater connection with each other, than with the Chineſe. We are what we are made by the objects with which we are ſurrounded. To expect that a man who ſees other objects, and leads a life different from mine, ſhould have the ſame ideas as I have, would be to require contradictions, and to deſire that a ſtaff ſhould not have two ends.

What injuſtice of this kind is done to men of genius! How often are they accuſed of folly, at a time when they give a proof of the higheſt wiſdom? Not but men of genius have often, as Ariſtotle ſays, a corner of folly. They are, for inſtance, ſubject to repreſent the art they cultivate, as of greater importance than it really deſerves (c). Beſides, the ſtrong paſſions which genius ſuppoſes, may ſometimes render their conduct irregular: but though this is the ſeed of their errors, it is alſo the ſeed of their knowlege. Men of a cold diſpoſition, void of paſſions and abilities, do not fall into the irregularities of the man of ſtrong paſſions. But it ought not to be imagined, as their vanity would perſuade them to believe, that before they take a reſolution, they calculate the advantages and inconveniences of it: was this the caſe, theſe men would only be determined in their conduct by reflection; but experience informs us, that they are always moved by ſenſations, and that in this reſpect, the men of cold diſpoſitions are the ſame as the reſt. To be convinced of this, let us ſuppoſe that one of them is bit by a mad dog: they ſend him to the ſea: he is put into a bark; they are going to plunge him. He runs no risk: he is ſure of it, and knows that in this caſe, his fear is altogether unreaſonable; he ſays ſo himſelf. They dip him in the water. Reflection no longer acts upon him; the ſenſation of fear takes poſſeſſion of his mind; and to this ridiculous fear he owes his cure. Reflection is then in men of a cold diſpoſition, as well as in other men, ſubject to ſenſation. If men of a cold conſtitution are not liable to ſuch frequent deviations, as the men of ſtrong paſſions, it is becauſe they have fewer principles of motion; and, in this reſpect, it is only to the weakneſs of their paſſions that they owe their wiſdom. However, what an high eſteem do they conceive of themſelves! With what reſpect do they think they inſpire the pub-

(c) They have frequently an excluſive eſteem for them. Among even thoſe, who diſtinguiſh themſelves only in the moſt trifling arts, there are ſome who think, that there is nothing done well in their own country, but what is done by them. I cannot help mentioning on this ſubject, a ſaying attributed to Marcel. A very celebrated Engliſh dancer, arrived at Paris, and went to pay a viſit to Marcel; "I came, "ſaid he, to pay you the reſpect which all "the men of our art owe to you: allow "me to dance before you, and to improve "by your advice."—"Freely, ſaid Mar-"cel." Immediately the Engliſhman performed a thouſand difficult ſteps, and croſs capers. Marcel looked at him, and ſuddenly cried out, "Sir, people jump in "other countries; they only dance at Pa-"ris; but, alas! poor kingdom! we can "do nothing well but that!"

lic,

ſic, who ſuffers them to enjoy the title of men of ſenſe, and never call them fools, becauſe they are never mentioned. How can they, without ſhame, thus ſpend their lives in watching for what is ridiculous? If they diſcover any thing in a man of genius, and he commits the ſlighteſt fault, though it ſhould be, for inſtance, paying too high a price for the favours of a woman, what a triumph is it for them! They aſſume a right from thence to deſpiſe him. Yet, if in the woods, if in ſolitude and danger, fear has often in their eyes exaggerated the greatneſs of danger; why may not love exaggerate pleaſure, as fear exaggerates perils? Are they ignorant, that there is properly none but himſelf that can be the juſt appraiſer of his own pleaſure: that men being animated by different paſſions, the ſame objects cannot appear of the ſame value to different eyes; that ſentiment alone can judge of ſentiment; and that the deſire of always citing to the tribunal of cold reaſon, is aſſembling the diet of the empire, in order to determine upon caſes of conſcience? They ought to be ſenſible, that before they paſs ſentence on the actions of a man of genius, they ſhould at leaſt know what are the motives that determine him; that is, the force by which he is drawn: but, for this purpoſe they ſhould know both the power of paſſing, and the degree of courage neceſſary to reſiſt them. Now, every man that ſtops to make this examination, may ſoon perceive, that the paſſions alone may fight againſt the paſſions; and that theſe rational people that pretend to conquer them, give to very weak inclinations the name of paſſions, in order to obtain the honours of a triumph. In fact, they do not reſiſt the paſſions, but eſcape from them. Wiſdom is not in them the effect of knowlege, but of an indifference equally barren of pleaſure and of pain. The abſence of unhappineſs is the only felicity they enjoy, and a kind of reaſon which ſerves them for a guide on the ſea of human life, makes them avoid the rocks only by ſteering at a diſtance from the fortunate iſle of pleaſure. Heaven arms men of a cold diſpoſition with only a buckler for defence, and not with a ſword to conquer.

Let reaſon direct us in the important affairs of life: but let us abandon the little affairs of it to our taſtes and our paſſions. He who would ever conſult reaſon, will be inceſſantly employed in conſulting what he ought to do, and never do any thing; he will always have before his eyes the poſſibility of all the misfortunes with which he is ſurrounded. The pain and daily irkſomeneſs of ſuch a conſultation would, perhaps, be more to be feared than the evils from which it might deliver him.

Whatever reproaches are made to men of wit, however attentive envy is to depreſs them, and to diſcover their perſonal and trifling faults, in order to ſhade the luſtre of their glory, the men of genius ought to be inſenſible to ſuch attacks, and to perceive that they are often ſnares which envy lays to divert them from their ſtudies. Of what importance is its inceſſantly repreſenting their inattention as a crime? People ought to know, that moſt of thoſe little attentions, ſo much recommended, have been invented by the indolent, to ſerve as the employment of their idle hours; that there is no man endued with a ſufficient attention to become illuſtrious in the arts and ſciences, if that attention is to be employed about an infinite number of trifles; beſides,

ſides, as what is called attention procures no advantage to a nation, ſo it is for the public intereſt that a learned man ſhould make a diſcovery at no more than fifty attempts at leaſt.

I cannot help mentioning on this ſubject a fact ſaid to have happened at Paris. A man of learning had for his neighbour one of thoſe indolent people ſo troubleſome to ſociety; this laſt, tired of himſelf, went one day to pay a viſit to the man of letters, who received him in a very agreeable manner, and with great politeneſs continued tired of him, till being weary of ſtaying any longer in the ſame place, the idler took his leave, in order to plague ſomebody elſe. He was no ſooner gone than the man of learning returned to his ſtudies, and forgot his vexation. Some days after he was accuſed of not having returned the viſit he had received, and taxed with the want of politeneſs; upon which he, in his turn, went to ſee the idler: "Sir, ſaid he, I am informed that you complain of me: however, you "know that it was being weary of yourſelf that brought you to me. I, "who tire nobody, received you as well as I could; it is then you who are "obliged, and I who am taxed with unpoliteneſs. Be yourſelf the judge of "my proceedings, and ſee whether you ought not to put an end to com- "plaints that prove nothing, but that I have not, like you, occaſion for "viſits, and have neither the inhumanity to plague my neighbour, nor the "injuſtice to defame him after I have tired out his patience." How many are there to whom we might apply the ſame anſwer? How many idlers require from men of merit that reſpect, and thoſe abilities, that are incompatible with their employments, and take upon them to demand contradictions?

A man has ſpent his life in negotiations, and the affairs, in which he has been employed, have rendered him circumſpect: let this man go into the world, they would have him wear that air of freedom which the conſtraint of his ſituation has made him loſe. Another man is of an open diſpoſition, and has pleaſed us by his frankneſs: he is required ſuddenly to change his character, and to become circumſpect, at the preciſe moment when it is deſired. People are always for having impoſſibilities performed. There is, doubtleſs, a neutral ſtate in which a man is found to have all the qualities that are not abſolutely contradictory; and I am ſenſible that a ſingular concourſe of circumſtances may bend us to oppoſite habits; but this is a miracle, and we ought not to reckon upon miracles. In general, we may aſſure ourſelves, that every thing depends on the diſpoſitions of men; that their good qualities are blended with their faults, and that there are certain vices of the mind annexed to certain ſtations.

Let a man poſſeſs an important poſt; let him every day have a hundred affairs to decide, if no appeal is made againſt his judgment, and his deciſions are never diſputed, it is certain that in time pride will take poſſeſſion of his ſoul, and he will have the greateſt confidence in his own underſtanding. This will not be the caſe where a man has his opinions frequently debated and contradicted in council by his equals; or with a learned man, who being ſometimes miſtaken in relation to ſubjects which he has thoroughly examined,

examined, will neceſſarily contract the habit of ſuſpending his judgment (d); this ſuppoſition, which being founded on a ſalutary diſtruſt of our own underſtandings, makes us penetrate to thoſe hidden truths that are ſeldom perceived by a proud and ſuperficial glance. It ſeems as if the knowlege of truth was only to be purchaſed by this wiſe diſtruſt of ourſelves. The man, who refuſes to doubt, is ſubject to a thouſand errors: he has himſelf ſet bounds to his mind. One of the moſt learned men in Perſia being aſked, how he had acquired ſo much knowlege, replied, By freely aſking what I did not know. "Examining one day a philoſopher, ſays the poet Saadi, I "preſſed him to tell me from whom he had acquired his knowlege. From "the blind, he replied, who do not lift up their feet without having firſt "felt with their ſtaff the earth that was to ſupport them."

What I have ſaid on excluſive qualities, both with reſpect to nature and contrary habits, is ſufficient for the object I had in view. I am now to ſhew the uſe that may be made of this knowlege. The principal is, to learn to make the beſt advantage of the mind, and of this I am going to treat in the following chapter.

CHAP. XVI.

The Method of diſcovering that kind of ſtudy for which we are beſt qualified.

IN order to know our abilities, we muſt examine with what kind of objects chance and education have principally charged the memory, and what degree of love we have for glory. Upon this combination we may determine the kind of ſtudy to which we ought to apply ourſelves.

There is no man intirely deſtitute of knowlege. According as we have in the memory more phyſical or hiſtorical facts, more images or ſentiments, we ſhall have a greater or leſs aptitude to natural philoſophy, politics, or poetry. Is it to this laſt art that a man would apply himſelf? He may become ſo much the greater painter in this kind of writing, in proportion as the magazine of his memory is better furniſhed with the objects that enter into the compoſition of a certain ſpecies of pictures. A poet, born in thoſe

(d) It might, perhaps, be wiſhed, that, before men were raiſed to high poſts, they would better perceive the difficulty of doing well; they would learn to diſtruſt their own underſtandings; for by applying this diſtruſt to buſineſs, they would manage it with more attention.

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rugged climates of the north, with a rapid wing inceſſantly traverſes the black ſtorms: his eye never wanders through ſmiling valleys; he only knows eternal winter, who, with his hair whitened by the hoar froſt, reigns over barren deſarts: the echoes only repeat to him the howling of bears: he ſees nothing but the ſnow and the ice thrown up in heaps; fir-trees as old as the earth, cover with their dead branches the lakes which waſh their roots. Another poet, born, on the contrary, in the fortunate climate of Italy, where the earth is ſtrewed with flowers, the Zephyrs with their breath gentle move the fragrant groves; he ſees the rivulets winding their ſilver ſtreams through the verdant meadows; art and nature unite to adorn the cities and fields, and every thing ſeems formed to pleaſe the eye and raviſh the ſenſes. Can we doubt, that the laſt of theſe two poets would draw more agreeable pictures; and the firſt, pictures more bold and terrible? However, neither of theſe poets would compoſe theſe pictures, were they not animated by an ardent love of glory.

The objects which chance and education place in our memory, are indeed the primary matter of the mind; but it remains there dead and inactive, till it is put into a ferment by the paſſions. It then produces a new aſſemblage of ideas, images, or ſentiments, to which we give the name of genius, wit, or talents.

After having diſcovered what is the number, and what the ſpecies of objects depoſited in the magazine of the memory, before we can determine on any kind of ſtudy, we muſt calculate to what a degree we are ſenſible of glory. We are liable to miſtake in this particular, and to give the name of paſſion to mere inclination; nothing, however, as I have already ſaid, is more eaſily diſtinguiſhed. We have a ſtrong paſſion when we are animated with a ſingle deſire, and all our thoughts and actions are ſubordinate to it. We have only inclinations, when the mind is divided by an infinite number of nearly equal deſires. The more numerous theſe deſires are, the more moderate are our inclinations; on the contrary, the leſs our deſires are multiplied, the more nearly do they approach to unity, and the more do theſe inclinations become lively, and the readier to be changed into paſſions. It is then the unity, or at leaſt the pre-eminence of one deſire over all the others, that conſtitutes paſſion.

The paſſions being once determined, we muſt know their ſtrength, and, for this purpoſe, examine the degree of enthuſiaſm we feel for great men. This is in early youth a pretty exact ſtandard of our love of glory. I ſay, in early youth; becauſe, being then more ſuſceptible of the paſſions, we deliver ourſelves the more freely up to our enthuſiaſm. Beſides, we have then no motives to degrade merit and abilities, and we may ſtill hope to ſee eſteemed in ourſelves what we eſteem in others: this is not the caſe with thoſe who are grown up to manhood. Whoever has attained to a certain age without having any merit, always indulges the contempt of abilities, to comfort himſelf for the want of them. In order to be a judge of merit, we ſhould be intirely diſintereſted, and, conſequently, not have yet experienced the ſenſation of envy. We are but little ſuſceptible of it in early youth: therefore,

therefore, young people commonly look upon great men with the ſame impartial eye as poſterity. It is generally neceſſary for us to renounce the eſteem of the men of our own age, and expect it only from thoſe who are young. It is from their praiſes that we muſt ſtate the value of our merit, and by the praiſes they give great men, we may form a judgment of the value of theirs. As we eſteem in others only ſuch ideas as are analogous to our own, our reſpect for wit is always proportioned to the wit we have ourſelves; we celebrate great men only when we are made to be great. Why did Cæſar weep on his ſtopping before the buſt of Alexander? It was becauſe he was Cæſar. Why do not we weep at the ſight of the ſame buſt? It is becauſe we are not Cæſar.

We may then from the degree of eſteem conceived for great men, meaſure the degree of our love of glory, and, conſequently, come to a reſolution in the choice of our ſtudies. The choice is always good, wherever the ſtrength of the paſſions is proportioned to the difficulty of the ſucceſs. Now it is more difficult to ſucceed in any one art or ſcience in proportion to the number of men employed in it, and to their having carried it nearer to perfection. Nothing can be more bold than to enter into the ſame courſe in which Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, and Crebillon, have rendered themſelves illuſtrious. To be diſtinguiſhed in it, a perſon muſt be capable of the greateſt efforts of mind, and, conſequently, be animated by the ſtrongeſt love of glory. He who is not ſuſceptible of this extraordinary degree of paſſion, ought not to enter the liſts with ſuch rivals, but to apply himſelf to a kind of ſtudy in which it is more eaſy to ſucceed. There are in natural philoſophy, for inſtance, uncultivated lands, and ſubjects on which the men of great genius, at firſt employed about more intereſting objects, have only in a manner caſt a ſuperficial glance. In this, and all other of the like kinds of ſtudy, the diſcoveries and the ſucceſs are within the reach of almoſt all minds; and theſe are the only ones in which the weak paſſions are capable of obtaining ſucceſs. He who is not intoxicated with the love of glory, ought to ſeek for it in winding paths, and particularly to avoid the roads beaten by the men of the greateſt underſtandings. His merit, if compared with that of theſe great men, will be eclipſed by their luſtre, and the public, prejudiced againſt him, will refuſe him even the eſteem he deſerves.

The reputation of the man of weak paſſions depends, therefore, on the addreſs with which he avoids being compared with thoſe who, burning with a ſtronger paſſion for glory, have made greater efforts of genius. By this addreſs, the man of weak paſſions, who has, however, in his youth contracted an habit of labour and reflection, may ſometimes, with a very ſmall degree of genius, obtain a very great reputation. It appears then that, to reap the greateſt advantage poſſible from his genius, the principal attention ought to be comparing the degree of the paſſion with which a man is animated, with the degree of the paſſion ſuppoſed by the kind of ſtudy to which he applies himſelf. Whoever is, in this reſpect, an exact obſerver of his own mind, muſt eſcape from the numerous errors into which men of merit

ſometimes fall. We ſhall not, for inſtance, ſee him engage in a new kind of ſtudy at a time when age has abated the ardour of the paſſions. He will perceive that, by paſſing ſucceſſively through different arts and ſciences, he can never become any thing more than univerſally ſuperficial; that this univerſality is a rock to which vanity leads, and upon which men of genius are often wrecked; and that, in ſhort, it is only in youth that we are endowed with that indefatigable attention which dives even to the firſt principles of an art or ſcience: an important truth, the ignorance of which often ſtops genius in its courſe, and oppoſes the progreſs of the ſciences.

In order to reap advantage from this idea, we ought to recollect, that the love of glory, as I have proved in my third diſcourſe, is kindled in our breaſts by the love of natural pleaſures; that this love is never more warmly felt than in early youth; and that it is, conſequently, in the ſpring of life, that we are ſuſceptible of a more violent love of glory. We then feel in ourſelves the glowing ſparks of virtues and abilities: health and ſtrength, which circulate in our veins, bring with them the ſentiment of immortality; the years appear then to paſs with the ſlowneſs of ages; we know, but we do not feel, that we muſt die, and thence we are more ardent to procure the eſteem of poſterity. It is not ſo when age cools our paſſions: we then have a perſpective view of the gulph of the grave, and the ſhades of death, mingling with the rays of glory, tarniſh their luſtre. The univerſe then in our eye changes its form: we ceaſe to have an intereſt in it, and do nothing of importance. If we ſtill follow the courſe in which the love of glory made us firſt enter, it is from our giving way to habit; for habit has become ſtronger while the paſſions were growing weaker. Beſides, we are afraid of the laſſitude of indolence; and, to preſerve ourſelves from it, continue to cultivate the ſcience, the ideas of which, being familiar, are combined in our minds without difficulty. But we are incapable of the ſtrong attention required in a new kind of ſtudy. Are we arrived to thirty-five years of age, we cannot, from being a great geometrician, become a great poet; from a great poet, a great chemiſt; from a great chemiſt, a great politician. Yet, at that age a man is raiſed to an high poſt; but if the ideas, with which he has already charged his memory, have no relation to the ideas required in the place he poſſeſſes, either the place does not require much wit or abilities, or that man will not fill it worthily.

Among the magiſtrates, who are ſometimes too much involved in the diſcuſſion of private diſputes, is there one who can with ſuperiority fill the firſt places, if he does not in his retired hours profoundly ſtudy the ſubjects relative to his employment? The man, who neglects to paſs through theſe ſtudies, mounts to high places only to diſhonour them. Is this man of an arbitrary and deſpotic temper? the enterprizes he will form will be ſevere, fooliſh, and always prejudicial to the public. Is he of a mild character, and the friend of mankind? he will not dare to undertake any thing. How can he run the hazard of making any changes in the adminiſtration? We do not walk with a firm ſtep in ways unknown, and interrupted by a thouſand precipices. The firmneſs and courage of the mind depends always on its extent.

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The man fruitful in the means of executing his projects, is bold in his conceptions: on the contrary, the man barren of resources, necessarily contracts an habit of timidity, which folly takes for wisdom. It is very dangerous to touch too often the machine of government, and there are also times in which the machine, if it is not furnished with new springs, will stop of itself: the ignorant workman dares to undertake nothing, and, therefore, the machine destroys itself. This is not the case with the able artist; he knows how to preserve it by repairing it with a bold hand. But a wise boldness supposes a profound study in the science of government; a study that is fatiguing, and of which we are only capable in early youth, and, perhaps, in countries where the public esteem promises many advantages. Wherever this esteem is barren of pleasures, it produces no great talents. The small number of illustrious men, who, from the chance of an excellent education, or a remarkable chain of circumstances, are rendered in love with this esteem, then desert their country, and this voluntary exile presages its ruin: they are like those eagles whose flight proclaims the approaching fall of the antique oak from which they retire.

I have said enough on this subject; and shall conclude, from the principles established in this chapter, that all the mental abilities are produced by the objects placed in our memory, and by those objects being put into a fermentation by the love of glory. It is then, as I have already said, only by combining the species of objects with which chance and education have charged our memories, with our love of glory, that we can really know the strength and kind of our genius. Whoever scrupulously observes himself in this respect, finds that he is nearly in the same situation with those able chemists, who, on being shewn the substances with which the retorts are filled, and the degree of heat that has been given them, can foretell the result of the process. Upon which I shall observe, that if there is an art of exciting in us strong passions, if there are easy means of filling the memory of a young man with a certain species of ideas and objects, there are, consequently, certain methods of forming men of genius.

This knowlege of the nature of the mind may then be very useful to those who are animated with the desire of becoming illustrious: it may furnish them with the means of doing it; teach them, for instance, not to diffuse their attention upon too great a variety of objects, but to fix it intirely on the ideas and objects relative to the science in which they would excel. Not that they ought, in this respect, to carry their scruples too far: for men are not profoundly skilled in any science, if they have not made excursions into every thing analogous to that they cultivate. We ought even to fix for some time our attention on the first principles of several sciences. It is of use to follow the uniform progress of the human mind in all the different arts and sciences, and also to consider the universal chain which binds together all the ideas of man. This study gives greater strength and extent to the mind; but we ought only to consecrate a small part of our time to it, and to fix our principal attention on the particulars of the art or science we

cultivate. He who in his ſtudies liſtens to an indiſcrete curioſity, ſeldom obtains a great reputation. Let a ſculptor, for inſtance, be from his taſte equally drawn towards the ſtudy of ſculpture and politics, and, conſequently, charge his memory with ideas that has no relation to each other, I maintain that the ſculptor will be certainly leſs ſkillful, and leſs celebrated, than he would have been, had he always filled his memory with objects analogous to the art he profeſſes, and had not united in himſelf, if I may venture thus to expreſs myſelf, two men, who can neither communicate their ideas, nor converſe together.

Moreover, this knowlege of the mind may not only be of uſe to individuals, but alſo to the public: it may enlighten miniſters with reſpect to the knowlege of making a proper choice, and enable them to diſtinguiſh men of ſuperior abilities. They will know, in the firſt place, the ſpecies of objects about which a man is employed; and, in the ſecond, the paſſion he has for glory, the ſtrength of which, as I have already ſaid, is always proportioned to his abilities, and almoſt conſtantly to the merit of thoſe with whom he converſes.

He who neither loves nor eſteems thoſe who, by their actions or works, have obtained the general eſteem, is certainly a man without merit. The little analogy between the ideas of a dunce and a man of genius prevents all ſociety between them. In relation to merit it is a curſe to be too much pleaſed with the converſation of men of mean abilities.

After having conſidered the mind in ſo many various relations, I ought, perhaps, to trace out the plan of a good education, and perhaps a complete treatiſe on this ſubject ſhould have been placed at the concluſion of this work. If I avoid this labour, it is becauſe, ſuppoſing that I could really point out the means of rendering men better, it is evident, that, from the actual manners of the people, it would be almoſt impoſſible to make uſe of them. I ſhall therefore content myſelf with caſting a rapid glance over what is called education.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Of Education.

THE art of forming men is in all countries ſo ſtrictly connected with the form of the government, that, perhaps, it is impoſſible to make any conſiderable change in public education, without making the ſame in the conſtitution of ſtates.

The art of education is no other than the knowlege of the means proper to form ſtrong and robuſt bodies, and wiſe and virtuous minds. As to the firſt object of education, we ſhould take example from the Greeks, who honoured bodily exerciſes, and with whom theſe where conſidered as medicinal. As to the means of rendering the mind more enlightened, more ſtrong and virtuous, I believe that having ſhewn the importance of making a proper choice of the objects placed in the memory, and the facility with which we may kindle the ſtrong paſſions, and direct them to the general welfare, I have ſufficiently pointed out to the intelligent reader the plan that ſhould be followed to perfect the public education.

We are, in this reſpect, too far diſtant from any thoughts of a reformation, for me to enter into particulars, which are always tedious when they are uſeleſs. I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving, that we do not, in this reſpect, attend to the reformation of the moſt groſs abuſes, and thoſe that are the moſt eaſily corrected. Who doubts, for inſtance, that, in order to reap the greateſt advantage in our power, we ought to make the beſt diſtribution of our time poſſible? Who doubts, that the ſucceſs depends, in part, on the œconomy with which it is managed? And what man, convinced of this truth, does not perceive, at the firſt glance, the reformation that might be made in this reſpect in the public education?

We ought, for example, to conſecrate ſome part of our time to the rational ſtudy of the national language. What can be more abſurd than to loſe eight or ten years in the ſtudy of a dead language, which we immediately forget after leaving the colleges; becauſe it is almoſt of no uſe in the courſe of life? In vain is it ſaid, that if young men are kept ſo long in the colleges, it is not ſo much to teach them Latin, as to make them contract the habit of labour and application. But to bend them to this habit, might not there be propoſed a ſtudy leſs irkſome and diſagreeable? Is there not reaſon to fear the extinguiſhing or blunting that natural curioſity, which in early youth warms us with the deſire

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of learning? How much would this desire be strengthened, if in the age when we are not yet distracted by strong passions, they were to substitute in the room of the insipid study of words, that of natural philosophy, history, mathematics, morality, poetry, &c.

The study of the dead languages, it is replied, in part answers this purpose. It subjects us to the necessity of translating and explaining authors; it consequently furnishes the heads of young men with all the ideas contained in the best works of antiquity. But, I reply, is there any thing more ridiculous than to consecrate many years to placing in the memory some facts or ideas, that we, by the assistance of translations, might engrave upon it in two or three months? The only advantage that can be derived from eight or ten years study, is then the very uncertain knowlege of those delicacies of expression in the Latin tongue, that are lost in a translation. I say very uncertain; for, in short, how long so ever we study the Latin tongue, we shall never know it so perfectly as we know our own. Now if among our learned men there are very few sensible of the beauty, strength, and elegance of a French expression, can we imagine that they are more happy in relation to a Latin one? May we not suspect that their learning, in this respect, is only founded on our ignorance, our credulity, and their boldness; and that were the manes of Horace, Virgil, and Cicero to appear, the most elegant discourses of our orators, would seem to them to be written in an almost unintelligible jargon?

I shall not, however, lay any stress on this suspicion, and will agree, if they will have it so, that a young man, on his leaving the college, is well instructed in the delicacies of the Latin tongue: but even upon this supposition I will ask, whether they ought to pay for this knowlege the price of eight or ten years labour; and if in early youth, in the age when curiosity is not obliged to struggle with any passion, when we are consequently more capable of application, these eight or ten years consumed in the study of words, would not be better employed in the study of things, and especially in things that have a relation to the situation in which a person will probably be placed? Not that I adopt the too austere maxims of those, who believe that a young man ought to be solely confined to the studies suitable to his station. The education of a young man ought to have a reference to the different paths he may take, for the genius should be left free. There are even branches of knowlege of which every citizen ought to be possessed; such are the principles of morality, and the laws of his country. All that I require is, that the memory of a young man be principally charged with the ideas and objects relative to the employment he will probably embrace. What can be more absurd, than to give exactly the same education to three different men, one of whom is to enjoy some little place in the revenue, and the two others the first places in the army, the magistracy, or the administration? Can we, without astonishment, see them employed in the same studies till they are sixteen or seventeen years of age, that is, till they enter into the world, and till diverted by pleasure they become incapable of application?

Whoever

Whoever examines the ideas with which the memory of young men are loaded, and compares their education with the ſtation in which they are to be placed, will find it as fooliſh as it would have been in the Greeks, to have given only a maſter of the flute to teach thoſe who were to be ſent to the Olympic games, to diſpute the prize of running or wreſtling.

But it may be asked, that if we might make a much better uſe of the time ſpent in education, why do we not attempt it? To what cauſe can we attribute our indifference in this reſpect? Why do we put from infancy the pencil in the hand of the deſigner? Why place at that age the fingers of the muſician on the ſtrings of the violin? Why do both theſe artiſts receive an education ſo ſuitable to the arts they are to profeſs, while we neglect ſo much the education of princes, of great men, and in general of all thoſe who by their birth are entitled to important poſts? Are we ignorant that the virtues, and particularly the learning of the great, has an influence on the happineſs or unhappineſs of nations? Why then do we abandon to chance ſo eſſential a part of the adminiſtration? It is not, I reply, from there not being in the colleges a great number of learned men, who are equally ſenſible of the faults in education, and the remedies that ſhould be applied to them: but what can they do without the aſſiſtance of the government? Now governments ought to trouble themſelves but little about the cares of public education. We ought not in this reſpect to compare great empires with little republics. Great empires ſeldom feel the preſſing want of a diſtinguiſhed genius: great ſtates ſupport themſelves by their own bulk. This is not the caſe with a republic, for inſtance, like that of Sparta, which, with a handful of citizens, was obliged to ſupport the enormous weight of the armies of Aſia. Sparta therefore owed her preſervation only to the great men who ſucceſſively aroſe in her defence; and being from thence conſtantly employed in forming new defenders, the principal attention of the government was fixed on the public education.

Great ſtates are ſeldom expoſed to ſuch dangers, and the ſame precautions are not taken for their ſecurity. The greater or leſs want of any thing, is in every inſtance the exact ſtandard of the efforts of the mind made to procure it. But it may be ſaid, that there is no ſtate, even among thoſe who are moſt powerful, where a want of great men is not ſometimes felt. This is doubtleſs true; but this want not being habitual, no care is taken to prevent it. Foreſight is not the virtue of great ſtates: perſons in important poſts have too much buſineſs upon their hands to attend to the public education; whence it neceſſarily becomes neglected. Beſides, how many obſtacles does perſonal intereſt, in great empires, raiſe up againſt the production of men of genius? Yet men might even there become well inſtructed; for nothing prevents taking advantage of early youth, in order to plant in the memory of young men the ideas relative to the poſts they may happen to poſſeſs: but never will they form men of genius; becauſe theſe ideas are barren, if not fertilized by the love of glory. In order to kindle this love in our minds, it is neceſſary that glory, like money, ſhould procure an infinite number of pleaſures, and that honours ſhould be the reward of merit. Now the intereſt of the powerful does not permit them to make ſo juſt a diſtribution: they

they would not accuſtom the citizens to conſider favours as a debt due to abilities, and conſequently they ſeldom grant them to merit: they perceive that they ſhall obtain ſo much the more gratitude from thoſe they oblige, as they are leſs worthy of their favours. Injuſtice then muſt often preſide in the diſtribution of favours, and the love of glory become extinguiſhed in all hearts.

Such are in great empires the principal cauſes of the ſcarcity of great men; of the indifference with which they are conſidered, and of the little care taken of the public education. Great, however, as the obſtacles are, which, in theſe countries, oppoſe the reformation of the public education; yet in monarchies, ſuch as moſt of thoſe in Europe, theſe obſtacles are not inſurmountable: but they become ſo in governments abſolutely deſpotic, ſuch as thoſe of the eaſt. What means are there in thoſe countries, of improving education? There can be no education without having an object in view, and the only one that can be propoſed is, as I have already ſaid, to render citizens ſtronger, more enlightened, more virtuous, and, in ſhort, more proper to contribute to the happineſs of the ſociety in which they live. Now in arbitrary governments, the oppoſition deſpotic princes think they perceive between their intereſt and the general intereſt, does not permit them to adopt a ſyſtem ſo conformable to the public utility. In theſe countries, there is then no object of education, and conſequently no education. In vain would they reduce it to the ſole means of pleaſing the ſovereign; for what an education muſt that be, where the plan is to be traced after the ever imperfect knowlege of the manners of a prince, who may either die, or change his diſpoſition, before the education is completed. In thoſe countries it would be in vain to labour after the reformation of the public education, till that of the ſovereign's was perfected.

But a treatiſe on this ſubject ought doubtleſs to be preceded by a work, ſtill more difficult to be wrote, in which it ſhould be examined, whether it be poſſible to remove the powerful obſtacles which perſonal intereſt always raiſes up againſt the good education of kings. This is a moral problem, which, in arbitrary governments, ſuch as thoſe of the eaſt, is, I believe, not to be reſolved. The viſiers, too jealous of reigning under the name of their maſters, always keep the ſultans in a ſhameful and almoſt invincible ignorance; and they keep from them every man capable of inſtructing them. Now where the education of princes is thus abandoned to chance, what care can be taken of that of private perſons? A father deſires to raiſe his ſons: he knows that neither knowlege, nor abilities, nor virtues, will ever open them a way to fortune; and that princes never believe they have occaſion for men of genius and learning: he will then deſire for his ſons neither knowlege, nor abilities: he will even have a confuſed idea, in ſuch governments, that a perſon cannot be virtuous with impunity. All the precepts of his morality will then be reduced to ſome vague maxims, which having but little connexion with each other, cannot give his children clear ideas of virtue; for he will be in this reſpect afraid of giving them precepts too ſevere, and too determinate. He will have a glimpſe that a rigid virtue would be injurious to their fortunes; and that if two things, as Pythagoras ſays, render a man like the gods, the one promoting the public welfare, and the other ſpeaking truth, he who modelled himſelf by the gods, would certainly be ill treated by men.

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This is the ſource of the contradiction to be found between the moral precepts, which even in countries ſubject to deſpotic power, people are forced by cuſtom to give to their children, and the conduct they preſcribe to them. A father ſays in general, and as a maxim, "Be virtuous:" but he ſays to them, without knowing it, "Do not mind this maxim, be a fearful and cautious villain; and "have no more honeſty, as Moliere ſays, than is juſt ſufficient to ſave you from "being hanged." Now in ſuch a government, how can they perfect even that part of education, which conſiſts in rendering men more firmly virtuous? There is no father, who, without contradicting himſelf, can anſwer the preſſing arguments that a virtuous ſon might offer on the ſubject.

To illuſtrate this truth by an example, ſuppoſe that under the title of baſhaw, a father deſigns his ſon for the government of a province, and that, ready to take poſſeſſion of that poſt, his ſon ſays to him, O my father, the principles of virtue I have acquired in my infancy have budded in my ſoul. I depart to govern men: it is their happineſs which I ſhall make my only aim. I ſhall not lend a more favourable ear to the rich, than to the poor. Deaf to the menaces of the powerful oppreſſor, I ſhall always hear the complaints of the weak under oppreſſion, and juſtice ſhall preſide in all my judgments.

O my ſon, how amiable does the enthuſiaſm of virtue render youth! but age and prudence will teach thee to moderate it. We ought, doubtleſs, to be juſt: yet to what requeſts art thou going to be expoſed! To how many little acts of injuſtice muſt thou be blind! If thou art forced to refuſe the great, what graces, my ſon, ought to accompany thy refuſal! Elevated as thou art, a word from the ſultan can reduce thee to nothing, and confound thee in the throng of the vileſt ſlaves. The hatred of an eunuch, or an icoglan, may deſtroy thee; think, therefore, of treating them with reſpect.——

Shall I reſpect injuſtice! No, father. The ſublime porte frequently requires a too burthenſome tribute from the people: I ſhall not liſten to its views. I know that a man is under obligations to the ſtate only in proportion to the intereſt it takes in his preſervation; that the unfortunate owe nothing to it; and that affluence itſelf, which ſupports the taxes, requires a wiſe œconomy, and not prodigality. Upon this point I ſhall enlighten the divan.——

Abandon this project, my ſon; thy repreſentations would be vain; it muſt always be obeyed.——

Obeyed! No, rather let me reſign to the ſultan the place with which he honours me.

O my ſon! a fooliſh enthuſiaſm for virtue leads thee aſtray. Thou wilt ruin thyſelf, and the miſeries of the people will not be removed: the divan will nominate in thy place a man of leſs humanity, who will diſcharge thine office in a more ſevere manner.

Yes, injuſtice will doubtleſs be committed; but I ſhall not be the inſtrument. The virtuous man entruſted with the adminiſtration, either does well, or retires: the man more virtuous ſtill, and more ſenſible of the miſeries of his fellow citizens, ſnatches himſelf from the converſe of cities, into deſarts, foreſts, and

even among the ſavages, he flies from the odious aſpect of tyranny, and the too afflicting ſight of the misfortunes of his equals. Such is the conduct of virtue. I ſhould have, thou ſayeſt, no imitators: I am not ſure of that: thy ſecret ambition makes thee think ſo, and my virtue makes me doubt it. But I would not have my example followed: did the zealous Muſſulman, who firſt proclaimed the law of the divine prophet, and braved the fury of tyrants, take care, in marching to puniſhment, that he was followed by other martyrs? Truth ſpoke from his heart, he owed it an authentic teſtimony, and he paid it. Do we owe leſs to humanity than to religion? And are its doctrines more ſacred than the virtues? But ſuffer me to examine thee in my turn: if I aſſociate myſelf with the Arabs, who plunder our caravans, may I not ſay to myſelf, whether I live with theſe robbers, or ſeparate myſelf from them, the caravans will be nevertheleſs attacked: yet living with the Arab, I ſhall ſoften his manners: I ſhall oppoſe at leaſt, the uſeleſs cruelties he commits on the travellers: I ſhall do my duty without adding to the public miſery. This reaſoning is thine: and if neither my nation, nor thyſelf can approve it, why then ſhouldſt thou permit, under the name of Baſhaw, what thou forbideſt under that of Arabs? O my father! my eyes are at length opened, I ſee that virtue does not inhabit deſpotic ſtates, and that in thy breaſt ambition ſtifles the cry of equity. I cannot proceed to grandeur by trampling juſtice under my feet. My virtue defeats thy hopes: my virtue becomes odious to thee, and thine hopes being deceived, thou giveſt it the name of folly. It is ſtill to thee that I muſt refer it; fathom the abyſs of thy ſoul, and anſwer me. If I ſacrifice juſtice to pleaſure and wanton caprice, by what power wilt thou recall to my mind, thoſe auſtere maxims of virtue I learned in my youth? Why is thine ardent zeal grown cool, when I am required to ſacrifice this ſame virtue to the orders of a ſultan, or a viſier? I dare to anſwer this queſtion: it is becauſe the luſtre of my grandeur, the unworthy price of a baſe obedience, would be reflected on thyſelf: thou wouldſt then overlook the crime; but if thou didſt diſcover it, thou wouldſt think it only my duty.

It is evident, that preſſed by ſuch reaſonings, it would be very difficult for a father not to perceive a manifeſt contradiction between the principles of ſound mortality, and the conduct preſcribed to his ſon. He would be forced to confeſs, that by deſiring the grandeur of his ſon, he has, in an implicit and confuſed manner, exhorted him to devote himſelf intirely to his advancement, and to ſacrifice to it even juſtice and humanity. Now in the Aſiatic governments, where, out of the mire of ſervitude they draw the ſlave who is to command the other ſlaves, this deſire muſt be common to all fathers. What man would then endeavour, in thoſe empires, to mark out the plan of a virtuous education, which no parent would give to his children? What madneſs but to pretend to form minds filled with magnanimity in countries, where men are not vicious from a general propenſity to vice, but becauſe vice is rewarded, and virtue puniſhed? What can be hoped for, in this reſpect, from a people among whom we can only cite as honeſt men, thoſe who are ready to become

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ſo as ſoon as ever the form of the government will admit of it? Where beſides, no body being animated with a ſpirit of patriotiſm, there cannot be any man truly virtuous? In deſpotic governments they ought then to renounce the hope of forming men celebrated for their virtues or abilities. This is not the caſe in monarchies, where, as I have already ſaid, this may be doubtleſs attempted, with ſome hope of ſucceſs; but it ought at the ſame time to be acknowleged, that the execution would be the more difficult, in proportion as the conſtitution of the monarchy approached nearer to the deſpotic form of government, or the manners of the people were more corrupt.

I ſhall not expatiate any farther on this ſubject, but ſhall content myſelf with recalling to the mind of the zealous citizen, who would form more virtuous and more learned men, that the whole problem of an excellent education is reduced, firſt, to the fixing in each of the different ſtates where fortune has placed us, the kind of objects and ideas that ought to be placed in the memories of young men; and, ſecondly, to the determining the moſt certain means of inflaming them with a love of glory and the public eſteem.

This problem being ſolved, it is certain that the great men that are now produced by a fortuitous concourſe of circumſtances, will become the work of the legiſlature, and that by leaving it leſs in the power of chance, an excellent education may infinitely multiply the abilities and virtues of the citizens in great empires.

FINIS.